
THE
CHRISTIAN'S
VIEWS AND REFLECTIONS
DURING HIS LAST ILLNESS.

Ann Cherrett

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THE
CHRISTIAN'S
VIEWS AND REFLECTIONS
DURING HIS LAST ILLNESS.

WITH
HIS ANTICIPATIONS
OF THE GLORIOUS INHERITANCE AND SOCIETY IN
THE HEAVENLY WORLD.

To which are annexed

TWO SERMONS,
PREACHED ON PARTICULAR OCCASIONS.

BY THE LATE
REV. SIMON READER.

Published from the Author's Manuscript,
By BENJAMIN CRACKNELL, A. M.

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THE
P R E F A C E.

THE Rev. Simon Reader received his academical education under the tuition of the Rev. Dr. Philip Doddridge. Having finished his preparatory studies for the ministerial office, he was ordained over the church, and congregation of Protestant Dissenters, of the independent denomination, at Wareham, in Dorsetshire. Here he continued to preach, "*Jesus Christ, and him crucified,*" for fifty years successively. The traits which constituted the character of this pious Christian, and eminent minister, are summarily and justly delineated in his monumental inscription.

"He was a man of extensive learning, ex-

“ emplary piety, and ready to every good
“ word and work.”

Approaching towards the close of life, the current of his thoughts were directed into a very favourite channel, as will evidently appear to every person who peruses the subsequent pages. It will be unnecessary for me to give a particular account of this work in the preface, as the title-page sufficiently indicates in general what is contained in the volume*. Every person must judge for himself concerning the excellence of the work, and the propriety of its publication.

The Editor, however, is apprehensive that this work may have an extensive circulation, as it is so admirably adapted to

* The Author had prefixed no title-page to the manuscript. The title-page that is now prefixed, was judged by the Editor (as signified above) to be expressive of the contents of the volume.

administer

administer assistance, support, and comfort to the genuine Christian, when involved in those circumstances that render such assistance, support, and comfort peculiarly necessary. And if most of the materials of which this work is composed, are to be found in preceding publications; yet I apprehend it will be readily acknowledged, that this work is by no means devoid of originality in its plan and execution. And that spirit of piety and devotion that animates the whole performance, cannot fail to enhance its value to those persons for whose service it was particularly designed.

Whether the worthy author considered the subject of this work as a continuation of Dr. Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," I cannot ascertain with any degree of precision. I conceive, however, that it may with some propriety be considered in that view; as our pious author begins this piece where Dr. Doddridge approaches towards a conclusion in
his

his excellent and useful work now mentioned. Dr. D. consonant to the title of his performance, attends to the rise and progress of religion in the soul. Mr. R. takes notice of the gracious influence of religion in a time of affliction, and in the immediate prospect of death. In the latter part of the work, the Christian is pursued into the invisible world; and from the representations of Scripture, assisted by an experimental acquaintance with Christianity, our author endeavours to enter into the views, sensations, and employments of "*the spirits of just men made perfect.*" Here scope is given to the imagination, as might well be expected, from the nature of the subject.

The two sermons preached on particular occasions, were published separately, soon after their delivery from the pulpit, at the request of his auditors. They are annexed to this posthumous work, that those persons who are desirous of obtaining all that has
been

been published of Mr. R's may procure his pieces without any great difficulty ; as this volume in duodecimo, with another in octavo (containing " Thirteen Sermons on the Parable of the Ten Virgins, with three others on Personal and Family Religion) comprise all the productions of Mr. R's pen, that were designed for the press.

I hope this little volume will not issue from the shades of obscurity in vain : I trust it will enlighten, and animate many ; many who are sitting in solitude, in darkness, and in distress ; and I willingly persuade myself, that those persons who derive edification and comfort from the perusal of the following sheets, will recommend them to the attention of their friends and acquaintance, that they may participate of the same pleasure, and acquire similar profit.

B. C.

Wareham,
June 14, 1794.

THE CONTENTS.

	Page
A N Introductory Prayer —————	1
The Christian's Preparation for Death —	5
The Christian's renewed Repentance, and Appli- cation to the Blood of Christ —————	19
The Believer's Conflict with the Tempter —	23
The Christian's Converse with his Friends in the Prospect of Death —————	49
The Christian's Converse with his own Family, supposed yet young —————	70
The Christian's Occasional dying Words —	84
The dying Christian's Soliloquies, supposing him to be sensible —————	96
The Christian's Entrance into the World of Spi- rits —————	99
The Christian's Appearance before God —	108
The Sinner appearing before God —	117
Heavenly Emulation —————	125
The Christian's attendance on his own Funeral	137
The Christian's attending the Death-beds of Others —————	153
	The

	Page
The Christian's Adoration on his Return from Earth — — —	167
The Christian forming an Acquaintance with the Inhabitants of Heaven — — —	170
The Christian taking a View of the Martyrs and other Saints in succeeding Ages — — —	203
A Specimen of the Christian's Tour through the Works of God — — —	210
The Heavenly Spirit reviewing Hell — — —	234
The Christian renewing his Acquaintance with former Friends upon Earth — — —	238
A Sermon preached May the 5th, 1763 — — —	243
A Sermon preached on New-Year's-Day, 1766 — — —	271

THE
CHRISTIAN'S
VIEWS AND REFLECTIONS,
Ec. Ec. Ec.

AN INTRODUCTORY PRAYER.

ETERNAL Majesty ! to whom all the secrets of the invisible world, where thou dwellest, lie open ; hear the prayer of a worm, taught, as he humbly hopes, by thine own grace, to aspire to an acquaintance with the mansions of the just, and with their employment and entertainment above, while yet conversant upon earth, and lodged in a habitation of clay ; for what other power but thine could kindle so high an ambition in a heart chained down to earth and sense, and in a manner buried in native blindness and carnality.

Out of the depths of darkness and ignorance I cry to thee, great Source of Light, to scatter the

B

gloom.

gloom, and cause the day-spring from on high to visit a benighted mind.

Enlightened and conducted by thee, the Saints have sometimes looked within the vail, and had a glimpse of the light yet inaccessible; I pant for the like happy vision, and labour upwards toward thy throne. O! release me from the clogs of sense and sin, and help a feeble mortal to climb the arduous, glorious way!

Thou sanctifiest the heirs of Heaven by thy spirit, formest them for their divine inheritance, and, except a man be born of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God: by him thou dwellest in thy saints as their gracious guardian; he is the earnest and pledge of their inheritance, and seals them to the day of redemption: by him thou hast revealed to thy servants those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man; but which thou hast prepared for them that love thee: by him they know the things that are freely given unto them of God; and he is their comforter when he opens these blissful prospects while they yet pass through this vale of tears.

Oh! sanctify me more perfectly, purge me from the remainders of carnality. Let sin, in its first principles, and in its most secret degrees, as well as in its greater maturity and more daring forms,

forms, be the object of my heartiest aversion: let it have daily less place in me: and teach and enable me to be continually mortifying the deeds of the body. As none but the pure in heart shall see God, so the less I am purified, the less shall I be able to discern or conceive of the felicity of the saints above, in their beatifying vision of thee. Create within me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me, prepare thy servant for the inheritance of the saints in light, that he may at present be enabled to understand what it is, before he enters upon the enjoyment of it. Forgive a sinner that has so often grieved thy spirit, nor let the sad instances in which I have done it be remembered against me, either to exclude me from the heavenly rest, or hinder the pleasing prospect and foretastes of it now.

Draw off my affections from the things of this world, and teach me to set them upon the things that are above; there Christ, my Saviour and Friend, sits at the right hand of God: thither let my soul be continually tending as to its portion and rest. Let the spirit take of Christ's, and shew it unto me, that I may glorify him, and may my most fervent desires be directed to the place of his blissful abode; let nothing upon earth be loved like my Lord, nothing seduce my heart from him, or

be able to clog one devout affection directed to so glorious an object. Grant me a sight of the heavenly Canaan, like that which Moses had of the promised land on the borders of it; let me taste some of the first fruits of it while yet in the wilderness, and press forward with eager desire to the full enjoyment, no longer loitering among the unities of time, nor terrified by the remaining difficulties of the way: let every succeeding day produce new and brighter prospects of the Jerusalem above. Unveil the most holy place, strengthen my faith to behold the adoring cherubims, the mercy-seat, and the glory of the Lord upon it.

When I approach the shades of death, let the bright beam of heavenly day enlighten its gloomy vale: and when my spirit bids adieu to time, let it be found prepared by thy grace for the glories of eternity, and enter the happy abodes of thy children. I ask these things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, my Saviour and Advocate: to whom with thyself and the holy spirit, be everlasting honour paid. Amen.

The Christian's Preparation for Death.

AS I know not what the issue will be of the disease which begins to seize me, while I have yet sufficient composure, I would improve it in further preparation for an eternal world, without forming any conclusion about the event of this affliction, and repeat the enquiry which I have often made: "Am I a child of God, and an heir of the heavenly inheritance?" I stand therefore at the bar of conscience, to answer to the following enquiries, as one that must shortly, and may very speedily, be placed at the tribunal of the Great Judge.

Do I love the Lord? If my treacherous heart deceives me not, I do. If I have ever loved or longed for any thing upon earth, I have loved the blessed God; I have longed for conformity to him and communion with him; the desire of my soul has been to his name, and the remembrance of him. As the hart pants after the water-brooks, so has my soul panted after the living God. The world, with all its wealth, its pleasures and its honours, has been unable to satisfy my desires. I have cried before the Lord, and my soul has meant

what my lips have spoken. "Give me thyself, O Lord, and with-hold whatever else thou wilt." I have delighted myself in his gracious smiles, triumphed in a sense of his love, and looked with disdain on the most flattering things that earth would afford. My soul has acquiesced in its divine portion, and scarce indulged a wish for any thing besides; the miser has not so delighted in his wealth, the ambitious man in his honours, nor the voluptuous sinner in his sensual pleasures, as my soul has delighted itself in its God. In those happy moments I have been highly pleased with the allotments of his Providence; I have tasted double sweetness in the mercies I have received, as coming from the hands of my God and Father; I have blessed him that he has not placed me in such circumstances of wealth and grandeur, as might have tempted my heart from him: I have said, "the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage."

If I have been afflicted, yet my Father's love has been like a sovereign cordial to me, my soul has been at ease in a sense of his favour, and my flesh scarce felt its pain; I have said, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good;" and my whole heart now again confirms its resignation to his will, and acquiesces in his present dispensations.

I have

I have studied to please him. Which of all the various branches of holiness and a divine temper has not my soul from time to time (though with deplorable imperfection) longed for, and sought after? I think I may, upon a deliberate enquiry, clearly answer, not one. Lord, I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; I have laboured, and prayed for purity, meekness, humility, self-denial, fervent love to God, spirituality in worship, and heavenly-mindedness. O! Searcher of Hearts, shew me if I mistake; and though I can never sufficiently lament my failures in these things, the reluctance I have sometimes found when my duty has called me, and my remissness in it, yet I have the testimony of my conscience, that as far as I know myself, I have chosen the service of God for my business, and made it, I hope, in some measure, my delight. My soul has said, "I love my Lord, I love his service; and would not on any account be dismissed from it." If he would give me a discharge, instead of regarding it as a privilege and favour, I should consider it as the most grievous mark of his displeasure, and would intreat him to permit me to continue in his service. I have said in his presence, when nature has languished, and death seemed ready to involve me in its shades; Lord, let me but be employed in thy service, and do

thou choose where thou wilt be served, whether in thy heavenly kingdom, or yet longer upon earth; and my soul now subscribes to it afresh; yes, my beloved God, (though loved, alas, far too faintly) I have chosen thy service for my eternal employment, and if it may be so, thy choice where thou wilt be served for the future, shall determine mine.

I have enquired before the Throne of Grace, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? Shew me, O Lord, and through thine assisting grace thy servant will chearfully obey; nor have I offered a more sincere request before the Lord than this, or to this effect, Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake. I have often asked myself, what can I do more for God, than I have hitherto done? In the morning I have enquired, what shall I do for God this day? Nor has it always (though too frequently) been a fruitless enquiry, but sometimes at least, and may I not say often? attended with some correspondent efforts. I have not been utterly regardless of the honour of God. In an hour of temptation and danger I have reflected, what reproach shall I bring upon the good ways of God, if I comply! How shall I grieve and discourage the saints, if I fall! How will the enemies of the
Lord

Lord be hardened, and blaspheme his name! and the reflection has not been without its influence to confirm me in my duty. I have been grieved at the sins of others, and especially at the falls of professors, and the apostacy of those that once seemed to be enquiring the way to Zion with their faces thitherwards; and if at any time I have hoped that God had made me useful to any, and I have seen these go back, I have felt a grief like that of a tender parent whom death has bereaved of a beloved child; nor have I been an unconcerned spectator of the lukewarmness of Christians, divisions in churches, or any of the distresses of Zion.

I have dreaded the consequence when the aspect of affairs upon the Church of God has been threatening, perhaps too much so, and with too little trust in the promises and grace of its almighty Head; I have trembled for the ark of God, and it has been, as far as I know my own heart, its sincere language. Send, O Lord, whatever judgments thou seekest needful, to bring the inhabitants of this land to obedience, to heal the disorders of thy churches, and to advance thine own glorious kingdom; only take not away the Gospel, nor send a famine of hearing the word of the Lord.

My soul has mourned in secret, when I have

seen none converted to God for a long time together ; I have poured out my sorrows before the Lord with importunate supplications for the effusion of his spirit, and the revival of his work ; nor has my heart known a greater joy, except in the happy moments of communion with God, than when I have had satisfactory evidence of the conversion of a soul to God ; especially when any related to me in the bonds of nature have been the subjects of this divine change. But my joy has not been confined within so narrow limits, it has not been confined within the circle of my acquaintance, I have rejoiced sincerely, though in less degrees, to hear of any turned to God, whom I have never seen, and probably never shall see in the flesh.

When I have discovered any marks of love to Christ in strangers with whom I have occasionally conversed, or in whom I expected to find no such thing, I have felt a like pleasing surprize to that, which I believe I should feel on meeting with an amiable brother, or sister, who had been lost, or whom I had imagined to be dead : my affections have been as sincerely as suddenly engaged by such a discovery, as if I had received some great and unexpected favour from them. I have regarded the poor, the foolish, the deformed, and the most unlovely

lovely objects in nature with the affection of a brother, as soon as I have had reason to believe that they were converted to God.

I have longed and prayed earnestly and particularly for the salvation of those that have seemed to be my enemies, when there have been any such; the affronts they have offered me, and the injuries they have done me, have sent me to the Throne of Grace, to wrestle with God for them, that they might be turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, and might receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified; and if I may venture to form a judgment from what I have felt within, my resentment has never risen so high against any of my fellow-creatures under the sun, but that it would have annihilated all my displeasure against them to be assured, that they were savingly changed, and brought to a true sense of their duty to God and man.

Though some, through an unhappy omission of the other branches of religion, have expressed themselves to persons upon the confines of eternity in a manner which seemed to imply, that nothing else was necessary than to forgive their enemies, and to be in charity with all men; yet I desire not to regard this as a light thing, when my Lord has

declared, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses,
 "neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."
 Nor would I deceive myself with a partial forgiveness, nor imagine that I forgive those that have injured me as I ought, if I confine the discoveries of it to a bare profession of it, or even to my desires and prayers for their everlasting welfare; which, one would imagine, none that have the least idea of the importance of eternity, should be able to withhold; but I have endeavoured to do good for the present time to those that I have thought have injured me; and though I have had some hard struggles with my own corruptions, yet I have determined and taken pleasure to triumph over my own resentments, to requite evil with good: and though I have not chosen to continue an intimacy with those that have betrayed me, or to put it in the power of those to injure me who I had reason to believe retained a disposition to do it; which the precepts of the Gospel, if I rightly understand them, do not require; yet as far as I know my own heart, there is no kind office which I would not do for the greatest enemy upon earth, which he needed, which I could do, and which I had reason to believe he would not abuse.

Have I sincerely repented of sin? If I have not had that bitter anguish, that overwhelming sorrow,
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for it, which some have felt in their first conversion, have I sincerely mourned for it before the Lord? Have I humbled myself in his presence upon that account? And have I seen so much evil in sin, as to engage me truly to hate it, and proclaim an irreconcilable war against it? And here I hope I may answer that I have. The all-seeing God has beheld me at his footstool, humbling myself before him, confessing and lamenting my transgressions, and though my repentance and humiliation has been much more faint and imperfect than I wished that it might be, and greatly disproportionate to the evil of sin, yet it has been, I hope, sincere: and I am the more encouraged to hope that it was so, from the concern I have felt that it was no more deep and painful, and the blessed God has sometimes granted me a gracious token of his acceptance of my humiliation, in the relief he has given me, when, under a painful sense of sin, I have poured out my complaints before him; I have gone to his throne with an aching, burdened heart, but have returned with my mind at ease, with sweet composure, and yet with the greatest tenderness of conscience, and dread of the least approach to sin that I have ever known.

But when I ask myself, with regard to the fixed and settled temper of my mind, whether I have
seen

seen so much evil in sin, as to engage me truly to hate it, and proclaim an irreconcilable war against it, this question admits greater of difficulties. That I have truly hated sin, in all its forms and kinds, when I have been humbling myself before God on those happy occasions that have been last reflected on, I think I may be very certain, but the remainder of indwelling sin and corruption makes it difficult to give so clear, and determinate an answer as I could wish, with regard to the settled temper of my heart, and yet it must be answered, lest I deceive myself. Do I not then truly hate that, in the settled temper of my heart, from which I have been from year to year very frequently and expressly desiring, and sincerely praying to be kept, though with too little importunity? and this I think I have certainly done with respect to sin.

Do I not indeed hate that which I have been from time to time daily more or less opposing, and which I have been frequently considering how I might most effectually shun? And this my conscience witnesses has been the case with respect to sin. Do I not sincerely hate sin, when my soul has often, and I think I may say constantly, rejoiced at any escapes from its snares of which I have been aware; and at advantages obtained against it;

it; and when my most sincere thanksgivings have been poured out before the Lord upon this account? Do I not hate that of which I have been alarmed, when I have had any light or favourable thoughts? That sin has often appeared in a flattering, tempting light, cannot be denied, but my soul has been startled when it has done so; and though too frequently not to such a degree as the nature of the case required, though not so far as to produce sufficient firmness and resolution against it at first, sufficient watchfulness and fervency in prayer against it, yet the alarm not sufficiently strong at first, has been renewed from time to time, when sin has gained any fresh advantages, till it has produced some happy effect. And what can be a greater proof of inveterate, determined hatred of any object, than an aversion to every favourable thought of it; or what assurance have I, in fact, or is it possible in the nature of things to have, that I hate any thing with a settled hatred, if these things are not a proof of my hatred of sin?

But a question occurs that has still some remaining difficulty. May not an unconverted sinner, from the force of an enlightened conscience, in a great measure imitate these things, while his heart yet retains the love of sin? I must acknowledge, that I cannot say it is impossible that he should, but
then

then I conceive it must be confined to some particular sin, and cannot extend to all sin without exception, and that too from temporal motives. For instance, the drunkard, when he finds his substance wasting, his family distressed, his health impaired, his reputation lost, his peace broken, and himself embroiled with those about him, he may sometimes very earnestly wish, that he had not such a relish for the cup of intemperance, and that he had more fortitude to withstand the importunity of his companions; he may sometimes, and repeatedly lament, with much bitterness, the power that this lust has over him; he may make some efforts against it, and perhaps, in some rare instances, not ineffectual ones; and the same may be said of other sinners. Thus I have put a case, which is the farthest that an unconverted sinner can be supposed to go. But it is on some or other of the foregoing temporal accounts, and his hatred is not against all sin, inward as well as outward, secret as well as open, and that which does not affect his temporal affairs, as well as that which does. But if such proofs of the hatred of sin as those before given are not valid, when it extends to all manner of sin, and is influenced by a reverence for the all-seeing God, by a fear of displeasing him, and grieving his holy spirit; by a sense of gratitude to the Lord Je-

sus.

fus Christ, and views to the world to come ; and when this hatred of sin is abiding and encreasing, then I can conceive no marks by which a thorough hatred of sin, in an imperfect creature, can be distinguished from a partial hatred of it in a hypocrite. Such, I trust, is my hatred of sin, and it has made me stand at a greater distance from it than in the former parts of life ; while, on the contrary, I have seen many whose consciences once discovered some degree of tenderness, wearing it off, and growing worse and worse.

Have I had a heart in heaven ? For Christ has said, " Where your treasure is there will your hearts be also." My affections have indeed been deplorably earthly and carnal, much set upon this world, and seen things, but yet they have not been confined to them : It has been, I think, a concern which has lain near my heart, to make sure of that great inheritance, and to be preparing for it : I have sometimes, in my best moments, even longed to take my flight from mortality to the blissful abodes above, and I have lamented to find my affections so earthly and carnal upon other occasions. I have longed for it, not barely as a refuge from trouble, but that I might be completely delivered from sin, might serve God without imperfection or interruption, and might be under his gracious smiles,

smiles, which I have now sometimes found so sweet. And though these proofs of a heart in heaven are far short of what might justly be expected from one that hopes for a treasure there, and far short of what has been found in many of the servants of God, who have conversed greatly above; yet surely they are something more than any unconverted sinner in the world experiences in himself.

And now, Lord, I hope I may say, "I am thy servant, truly I am thy servant; I have not, as far as I know, wilfully overlooked any thing which might tend to enable me to judge of the state of my own soul; I have not resolutely formed any conclusion in my own favour, further than, I humbly apprehend, I have ground for; but if I have in any thing deceived myself, shew me my mistake, search thou me and try me, and shew me if there is any false way in me."

The Christian's renewed Repentance, and Application to the Blood of Christ.

BUT, Lord, though thy servant hopes and trusts that he does indeed belong to thee, yet I cannot be sufficiently humbled before thee for the innumerable instances in which I have failed of my duty, and sinned against thee, and for the deplorable remainders of sin that are yet found in me. These things have clogged my progress in the enquiry I have been making into the state of my soul; these things have often made me stop in my examination, and ask, "Am I not mistaken? Is this "and that thing consistent with the truth of "grace?" These things have made me doubt and review my evidences for a better life with particular attention, lest I should be fatally and finally mistaken. These things have grieved thy spirit, and deprived me of the advantage of his more full and clear witness with my spirit, that I am a child of God.

And in what language shall thy servant express before thee his grief and shame upon this account? O my God, I have had in thee a most bountiful and merciful father, but I have been to thee a most
stubborn,

stubborn, perverse, disobedient child; thou hast loaded me with benefits for time and eternity; my whole life has been one continued scene of mercy on thy part, but how little better has it been than a continued scene of rebellion on mine? Thou hast pardoned my sins, when I have lamented them before thee; thou hast lifted up the light of thy countenance afresh, when I had caused thee to hide thy face; thou hast healed my conscience when I had wounded it, restored my broken peace, and granted me a joyful sense of my relation to thee: thou hast given me foretastes of the heavenly inheritance, when my carnality and earthly sensual disposition had deserved that my name should be blotted out of the book of life. Thou hast not taken thy holy spirit utterly away from me, though I have grieved him a thousand and a thousand times over: I have found thee ready to return, when I have sought thy face, though I had deserved that thou shouldst utterly forsake me; and quickening me to seek thee when thou mightest most justly have left me to forget thee, and thereby ruin myself for ever. Thou hast been to me like the father of the prodigal son, in my returns to thee, when I was yet a great way off, and hast met me, and embraced me with thy love. Amazing grace! boundless obligation, under which thou
 hast

hast laid me ! and yet I have forsaken thee again, I have wandered afresh, I have multiplied my wanderings and provocations, and my life has been an amazing contrast of pardoning grace on thy part, and stubborn rebellion, or, at least, great instability and inconstancy on mine.

And now, Lord, what shall I say before thee ? I acknowledge myself vile beyond measure, a fit object for thy wrath, and yet an amazing monument of thy patience ; it is astonishing grace that I am out of hell, and yet more astonishing that I should be indulged to hope, to expect, to depend upon eternal life.

Shouldst thou deal with me in rigorous justice, eternal destruction must be my sure and tremendous portion, and I should be obliged to look upon thee with dread and terror, hadst thou not appointed a great and glorious way for the pardon of my sins, and my acceptance before God.

But, for ever be that grace adored which appointed me a Saviour, and which encouraged and invited me to draw nigh to God through him. I confess my sins, O Lord, as over the head of this great sacrifice, by humble acts of faith, putting them upon him.

Remember, Lord, the abasement of thy son, his amazing stoop, his dreadful sufferings, and the
loads

loads of ignominy he endured when he bore my shame upon himself: remember his bloody sweat, his hands and feet nailed to the cross, his side pierced with the spear, his wounded heart, his flowing blood, his do'eful cry, his expiring groans, his last agonies, and his head bowed in death. This, Lord, is the sacrifice in which I trust, this the foundation of my eternal hope, this is the refuge to which I flee from thy wrath, so justly, so greatly deserved; I accept afresh the great atonement, I cast my soul upon it, and if I perish, it shall be at the foot of the cross of Christ. I receive the Lord Jesus, by this renewed act, to be my divine instructor and guide, my sacrifice and great high priest, my sovereign, my guardian and my portion; and my soul confides in the virtue of his sacrifice, in the prevalence of his intercession, in his interest in heaven to render me accepted before thee, and introduce me to eternal life. O let not my hope make me ashamed; I humbly trust it shall not, it cannot; thou canst not deny thyself, thou canst not be unmindful of the sacrifice of thy son, or deaf to the voice of my advocate; nor canst thou reject the humble penitent, that approaches thee with a broken heart and a contrite spirit in his name.

*The Believer's Conflict with the Tempter.**Tempter.*

TH Y increasing disorder shews that thou art hastening to an eternal world, and art soon to appear before the Judge of quick and dead; what if thou shouldst then be found to have deceived thyself, and all thy hopes appear to be built upon a sandy foundation?

Believer. I know not indeed what the issue of the present dispensation of Providence will be, though my weakening strength and growing disease seem to presage my speedy passage out of time; my Father, if he please, can call me back to life, renew my wasting strength, and continue me yet longer an inhabitant of earth; be it as he pleases, I am not solicitous about the event; for I am his, bought with the blood of his son, and renewed by the spirit of his grace. I have examined the foundation of my hope, and find it to be firm, and can therefore chearfully say, "Here I am, let him do
" with me as seemeth him good.

Tempter. But thou hast been partial in thy own favour in thy self examination.

Believer. I have not been willingly so; I have
dreaded

dreaded a mistake ; I have prayed to be preserved from any fatal mistake, and I have examined myself with much care, as well knowing that I must be tried at an unerring tribunal. Nor is this the only occasion on which I have examined my own state ; I have often communed with my own heart on this important enquiry ; and though I have seen abundant cause for the deepest humiliation, yet the result of my several enquiries has been this joyful conclusion, that I have received the grace of God in truth ; if I might mistake once or twice, yet surely I could not be always mistaken, when I have examined myself with much dread of a mistake, and renewed my supplications at the Throne of Grace to be preserved from it ; and therefore, upon the whole, I can comfortably form this conclusion, that I am not mistaken.

Tempter. But upon some of thy enquiries into thyself, thou hast not been able to give any other than a doubtful answer, with respect to thy spiritual state.

Believer. It is true, that in an hour of temptation and darkness, and when the exercises of the divine life have been, as I must acknowledge they have been sometimes very deplorably remitted, the answer has been doubtful, I have been almost ready to form conclusions against myself : but those seasons

seasons were not the proper seasons to judge of my eternal state, because, through the discouragements under which I then laboured, I was ready to overlook the evidence of my relation to Christ, which I had in brighter seasons, and to judge alone from what I then found; and yet often, even in those seasons, hope has prevailed in my enquiries. But if my heart had then, through discouragements, more plainly condemned me than it did, God is greater than my heart, and knoweth all things.

Tempter. To judge right, those seasons which thou callest hours of darkness and temptation, and the remissness of the exercises of the divine life must be taken into the account.

Believer. I acknowledge that they must, and therefore in my more sedate hours, I have taken account of those melancholy hours; I have examined the grounds of the fears that I then had, and upon the comparison of my temper and conduct at one time with what it has been at another, I have seen reason to hope and believe that I belong to God.

Tempter. Thou hast judged of thyself from thy temper and conduct upon some extraordinary occasions, and an hypocrite might by such a method of judging of himself, come to the same conclusion, if he takes his account only from the seasons

in which he has been especially convinced or awakened by the word or providence of God.

Believer. I have indeed brought into the account my temper and conduct upon extraordinary occasions, as much assisting me to make a just conclusion; but in some particulars, it has been such as the hypocrite can never attain, and yet I have not judged by these circumstances, but by the settled bent of my heart; and this is carrying the enquiry further than a hypocrite can ever go, and form the same conclusion at last.

Tempter. Review thy enquiry, for a mistake in it would be of dreadful consequence.

Believer. A mistake in the conclusion drawn from the whole would be indeed dreadful beyond imagination; but as I have often, and in particular so lately examined myself with care and fear of a mistake, I have no reason to be apprehensive of it, and have other work to do in my present case, and in the short time, which seems to be all that I have before me, than to be continually doing the same thing over again.

Tempter. A refusal to review thy enquiry shews that thou darest not do it, lest thou shouldst see something which should oblige thee to retract a conclusion in thy own favour, which thou art resolved to maintain; and this alone affords a strong presumption

presumption that thou hast formed a false conclusion.

Believer. If my refusal to review my enquiry had proceeded from such a cause, it would equally have prevailed to have kept me from making any enquiry at all, or have led me to rest in a very superficial one; and though I am convinced that it is a very dangerous symptom when men are afraid to look into their own hearts, yet I have no ground from thence to form any conclusion against myself, for I have not been afraid to look into mine; and I rejoice and bless my gracious God, that I have found fair marks of its being renewed and sanctified by the power of his spirit.

Tempter. But thou hast deceived thyself in several particulars, and therefore the conclusion at last must be false.

Believer. A mistake in one or more of the premises will not necessarily infer the falsehood of the conclusion, because I have not judged upon any single evidence alone, but from the whole taken together: and yet I am not conscious of having deceived myself in any one particular.

Tempter. Many things in which thou hast comforted thyself were things that passed a long time ago; whereas thou shouldst judge from later and present things; and it is very dangerous to

judge from imaginary past experiences, if not supported by succeeding ones.

Believer. Many of my experiences were indeed ancient experiences, and I bless my God that they were; they are by no means to be overlooked, as they shew that I have long been a monument of his grace; and instead of weakening, do indeed strengthen the conclusion; but I have not, and durst not have rested my hope upon past and distant experiences alone; but they have been supported by many of later date.

Tempter. Thy heart is deceitful, and he that trusteth his own heart is a fool.

Believer. I know by sad experience the deceitfulness of mine; I have not therefore dared to trust my own imaginations concerning the characters of the children of God, but have taken them from the infallible rule of the word of God; nor have I dared to trust to the first appearance of things with respect to my conformity to those characters, but have examined myself with much care and attention: this is not trusting my own heart. Those whom we trust, we do not use closely to sift and examine, and call in question every thing they say; and lest, after all, I should be mistaken, I have earnestly begged of God to search me and try me, and shew me if there is any false way in me; and if enquiries often
made

made in this manner cannot be depended on, then it is not to be conceived for what use so many marks and evidences of the children of God are left upon record in the Scriptures, which yet it is most certain were not left in vain. The delightful satisfaction, therefore, to which I am arrived, I regard as the witness of the spirit of God with my spirit, that I am a child of God.

Tempter. Thou dost not know the time and means of thy conversion, which certainly thou wouldst have known, if thou hadst been converted at all.

Believer. This some good men have asserted, too much making their own experiences a standard for others: but the word of God says no such thing; and the experience of many others that have given equal manifestations of the power of godliness with the former, evidently contradicts it. As therefore I had the advantage of a religious education, of sitting under an evangelical and powerful ministry, from my youngest years, and of early convictions; in which case it is not unusual for the saints to be unable to fix the time and means of their conversion, the work of grace being gradually wrought in their hearts, I have no need to perplex myself on this head. Whereas I was blind, now I see.

Tempter. But since thou hast flattered thyself that thou hast been converted, there have been such things found in thy temper and conduct, and thou hast fallen so far into sin, as it is hard to reconcile with a converted state; and if thou wast not converted then, certainly thou art not now.

Believer. I acknowledge and lament, and have often lamented, before God, those things which it has been difficult to reconcile with a work of grace at that time wrought upon my heart; and yet David and Peter, after they had received the grace of God, fell into worse things than any into which I have been suffered to fall; and though I have fallen, yet through the assistance of that grace, I have risen again; and I have frequently and solemnly humbled myself before God: I have carried on a continued warfare against sin in all its kinds and degrees; and, surely, this can never be reconciled with hypocrisy: And even supposing that I was not then converted, when I flattered myself that I was, yet it will not follow that I am not now; for supposing the work of grace to be gradually wrought, if my heart is now more fixed for God, and determined in his ways than it then was, I may now be a child of God, though then I was not.

Tempter. How canst thou pretend that thou hast carried on a continued warfare against sin, when
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thou hast often played with temptations, and so often and easily yielded to them?

Believer. I own there is too much foundation for the charge. I have striven against sin too faintly and inconstantly, and with far too little sense of its malignant nature; but yet I have really and earnestly striven against it, both before and after those unhappy seasons; and this opposition has been continued from year to year; it has never been laid aside, though it has been often subject to deplorable abatements, which may therefore certainly be called a continued warfare; and yet I have often shunned temptations, and gained many victories, through the power of the Redeemer's grace over my corruptions, and from my very soul blessed God, when I have been enabled, and engaged to do either the one or the other.

Tempter. It is egregious self-flattery to pretend that thou hast got a victory over those corruptions which have afterwards risen, and again and again prevailed.

Believer. Is there then no victory obtained over an enemy without his total destruction? And do not Princes often conquer those enemies who afterwards recover strength, and struggle afresh? There may be many victories which yet are not decisive and final. I am only to expect the entire destruc-

tion of sin with the dissolution of my nature, though I have through grace withstood many temptations and many struggles of corruption, and on some happy occasions the victory has been carried so far, that, for a considerable time, I have had but little difficulty to withstand those corruptions which had before occasioned me much exercise and distress; and though, through the imperfection of my nature, I have afterwards, by degrees, abated my caution against these things, and they have thereby gained some new advantage, yet I have humbled myself afresh before God, sought strength from above, renewed my watchfulness, and, through the riches of divine grace, regained the ground which I had foolishly lost.

Tempter. A course of sinning and repenting is a very dangerous symptom of hypocrisy; and thou thyself hast acknowledged it to be such in thy observations upon the conduct of sinners.

Believer. And I would with equal readiness acknowledge it in my own case, so far as the circumstances are the same in which I have censured or warned others; for I desire not to judge more favourably of myself than of others; and indeed I apprehend there is an extreme difficulty to distinguish, in this respect, betwixt the case of some hypocrites of the highest, and some sincere Christians
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of the lowest class; but some difference, I conceive, is to be made, both with respect to the kinds of sin, the frequency of it, and the lengths which each run in it: For instance, the sincere Christian seldom, if ever, falls twice into any gross sins, where the guilt is apparent and undeniable; or, if twice, yet not often; and if he approach too near to it, yet he does not go far in it. But the chief difference, I apprehend, consists in the motives of the sincere Christian's repentance for sin and watchfulness against it and those of the hypocrite; to which I have attended in my examination of myself; and in this respect, as far as I am able to judge of myself, I stand acquitted of the charge of hypocrisy.

Tempter. If thou hadst truly repented of any particular sin, thou wouldst never have fallen into it again.

Believer. Did not Abraham twice deny his wife, viz. in the courts of Pharaoh and Abimelech? Yet it would be unjust to suppose, on account of his being guilty in the latter instance, that he had not repented of the former, especially as Sarah's chastity was exposed to danger the first time, and he received a confounding reprimand from Pharaoh. Did not Jehoshaphat join twice with the wicked kings of Israel, viz. Ahab and Jehoram, though he had certainly reason, from the danger he was

in the first time, to repent it? Did not Peter twice fall by his cowardice: first, in denying his Lord; of which we are assured that he repented bitterly; and yet afterward he first eat with gentiles, but when some came from James, he withdrew and separated himself? And does not the apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, speak of the sin which did so easily beset them? and would a single instance of its besetting them have been a sufficient foundation for such a manner of expression? Or can it be supposed that an entire and perpetual victory should, in common cases, be obtained, after one or two conflicts, over constitutional sins, or those to which a man's circumstances especially incline him? or which, perhaps, an unhappy habit has greatly strengthened, that they should never more gain any kind of advantage? Wandering thoughts in duty, and guilty inclinations to those sins which must easily beset us, will frequently return; and it would be happy for a Christian, if they did never prevail again; but indeed, if this was to be the case, a Christian would soon be perfect; for if he should never fall more than once into such sins of constitution, much less would he do it into others to which he is less inclined.

Tempter. There is a conscience in every man, which makes an opposition against sin, and it is
hard

hard to distinguish the opposition made by the natural conscience from that made by a principle of saving grace.

Believer. It is indeed hard to distinguish betwixt the one and the other in all possible cases ; and yet, surely, there is some difference betwixt a conviction that certain actions are wrong, and the expostulations that arise in the mind in consequence of it, on the one hand, and a settled hatred and determined opposition against them, and all inclinations to them, on the other hand. The expostulations of conscience seem also to rise from the natural unfitness of actions, from the shamefulnefs of them, and from the danger to which they expose men ; but a principle of grace opposes sin, as it is rebellion against God, ingratitude for his goodness, and for the love of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and as it alienates the soul from God, and unfits it for communion with him. The opposition which conscience alone makes against sin, is generally ineffectual ; but that which a principle of grace makes, produces many glorious victories over sin. The opposition of conscience generally grows weaker and weaker in those that are unsanctified, but that which divine grace makes generally strengthens. But, perhaps, the chief criterion of all is, that conscience upbraids a man only, or chiefly, for

gross immoralities, but is little, if at all conversant about the inward temper of the heart; whereas a principle of divine grace teaches the soul to watch against the secret motions of sin, as well as its breaking out into open acts, and humbles the soul before God for those motions of sin within, of which not the least outward signs have ever appeared.

Tempter. Thou hast been often influenced, in part at least, by temporal motives, in thy opposition against sin. Against what sin hast thou warred, when thou hast not been influenced by temporal motives? If thou hast guarded against intemperance, lasciviousness, falsehood, injustice, passion, profaning the Sabbath in word or deed, unkindness to relatives, and quarrels with those about thee; in all these thou must have been, and it is certain thou hast been, influenced by temporal motives of the shame or the misery that these sins would have brought upon thee, and the reputation that was to be obtained by watchfulness against them; and thus all the regularity, all the apparent worth of thy character degenerates into a mere show, maintained for temporal purposes; and the same may be said of thy duties, and thy pretended zeal for God, and concern to do good: Thou knowest the hypo-

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crisfy that there has often been working in thy heart in these respects.

Believer. It is an instance of the great goodness of God, that temporal motives often join with those of a spiritual nature, to rouse the soul to an opposition against sin, the enchantments of which are so strong, as to need all possible arguments to preserve it from being deluded by them; and nothing is more frequent, than for many motives to be united to determine mankind for or against certain actions. But such is my hatred of sin, that I rejoice that I have had so many temporal motives to strengthen those of a spiritual nature against it: and may I not from hence conclude, that I hate it of a truth? That I have often too much neglected to attend to spiritual motives, and too much confined my views to such temporal considerations, I acknowledge with humiliation; and thus there has been some degree of hypocrisy; but it has not been wholly so: Spiritual motives, I hope, would often at least have prevailed alone, though perhaps not with equal success; and they have actually prevailed, with respect to me, against the wanderings of my heart in prayer, sinful inclinations, and the inward workings of tumultuous passions.

Tempter.

Tempter. Thy care against these too has been from temporal motives, lest, if indulged within, they should break forth.

Believer. It has not been the whole reason of my care. With respect to the former, when I have not been, nor expected to be, a mouth for others, it could not; and with respect to the rest, I have been recalled to a proper temper by the remembrance of the authority and the grace of Christ, without that fear.

Tempter. Some souls are passed into an eternal world, and perhaps for ever lost, for whose salvation thou didst not do what thou mightest and oughtest to have done, and what thy own conscience again and again admonished thee to do: Perhaps some are already lost, or in the way to be so, to whose ruin thou hast contributed by thy sins, of which they have been the witnesses, and by which their hearts have been hardened. How then canst thou hope for thy pardon?

Believer. It is a painful and distressing reflection in either view; for which I have again and again humbled myself before God, and endeavoured to improve every such apprehension to awaken me to greater diligence and a more exemplary behaviour, to prevent any such painful reflections in future instances. And where it has been no longer
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in my power to attempt any thing to prevent the sad effects of my sins with respect to any yet alive, I have earnestly prayed to God for them, that he would turn them to himself, prevent their ruin, and heal the sad effects which my sins tended to produce.

Tempter. Thou hast been ashamed of Christ and of his words, and he has said, "Whosoever shall be
" ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the
" Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the
" glory of his Father, with the holy angels."

Believer. I can recollect little that I have said or done, that can fall under that denunciation; and that, I think, has been through inadvertence and surprize, and with scarce any deliberation; and for which I humbly ask divine forgiveness. But that I have forborn to speak for Christ and his Gospel, or its sacred truths, or in so strenuous a manner as I have afterwards thought I ought to have done, cannot be denied; but I have afterwards endeavoured to collect more courage; and, if an opportunity has offered, to repair the hurt that might have been done by sinful cowardice or seeming compliance. But I acknowledge, if the Lord should be strict to mark iniquity in this, as well as in thousands of other instances, I should be
utterly

utterly undone; but I fly to the refuge of his mercy: I repent in dust and ashes at his footstool, and look to the atoning blood of Jesus for the expiation of this and all my manifold offences.

Tempter. Thy sins are too great, too numerous, and too aggravated to be pardoned.

Believer. It sometimes appears almost too great to be hoped for that they should; but shall I dare to set limits to almighty mercy, and the atoning virtue of the blood of Jesus which cleanses from all sin? Shall I dare to contradict the ample assurances, that, through Christ, God pardons all trespasses; and that all manner of sins and trespasses shall be forgiven to those that truly repent and believe? I rely, therefore, upon the word of unchanging truth, confessing my sins, and humbling myself for them; and having earnestly endeavoured truly to forsake them, I humbly and cheerfully expect pardon, and eternal life, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tempter. How knowest thou that there is any life after this, or any other state besides the present?

Believer. Now I plainly perceive what I before suspected, that the painful doubts with which I have been conflicting, proceeded from my grand adversary. Thou hast betrayed thyself, O my enemy;

my; and I might here justly refuse to take any notice of what thou hast further to offer. Thou knowest that there is an invisible, and (with respect to mortals) a future state: In that invisible state thou art exquisitely miserable, and art labouring, with all these indefatigable pains and craft of malice, to draw the wretched sons of Adam into thine own condemnation. Thou wouldst not be so industrious to delude and entice them to evil, if thou didst not know that thou shouldst, by prevailing against them, plunge them into future ruin; nor wouldst thou so much labour to retard and molest the progress of believers in religion, if thou didst not know that there was a crown of life prepared for them.

Tempter. But what if thou shouldst be mistaken? How canst thou be sure of the reality of a state, which neither thou nor any man living hath ever seen?

Believer. The light of Nature affords a variety of convincing arguments to demonstrate the reality of a future state of retribution; that difference which it is certain that the justice of God will require to be made betwixt the righteous and the wicked, is not made in the present state; in which the righteous often labour under the greatest outward and inward distresses, and have often endured

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the greatest afflictions, even for the sake of their adherence to their duty : While the wicked, on the contrary, frequently live and die in prosperity, oppress the just, and even outgrow the remorse of their consciences ; and thus, the more wicked they are, the less do they suffer from inward reproach. The soul is made capable of perpetual improvements, far greater than in the present life are attainable ; it can therefore by no means be supposed, consistently with divine wisdom, to be formed for so short a duration alone. If the soul was mortal, it would be in the power of any villain to put an end to the being of a good man, or to his own, and thus frustrate divine mercy in the one case, and justice in the other. The judgment which conscience now passes upon men, and which derives its principal weight and foundation from the expectations of a future state, is a sufficient intimation, wrought into the nature of man by its great Author, that there is a life to come ; and it is evident, that almost all nations, and some of the most barbarous, have plainly discovered their expectations of it : Nor is there any thing in the nature of the soul that can give us the least ground to suspect it mortal, but every thing perfectly the reverse ; and the apparent decay of the faculties of the mind, in certain cases, with those of the body, can prove
nothing

nothing against the immortality of the soul, since the faculties of the mind are often found in their full vigour, even in the immediate approaches of death; and since it is evidently reasonable to believe that the soul, in its present connexion with the body, and so far confined to make use of it in its operations, should be clogged in its exercises by the disorders of the body, as it is evident that it is in deliriums, melancholy, and distraction, which are plainly bodily diseases, because healed by methods adapted to the nature of the body; and when they are cured, the soul returns to the due exercise of its faculties. But if there were no other arguments to demonstrate the immortality of the soul, it would be abundantly sufficient to me that the Holy Scriptures, the word of the God of Truth, assure us that there is a state beyond the present life.

Tempter. How knowest thou the Scriptures to be the word of God?

Believer. Here also might I justly refuse to answer thee; but the proofs of the truth of Christianity are strong enough for ever to confound thee. It is certain, both from the writings of Christians and Heathens, that soon after the time in which Christ is said by the Evangelists to have appeared in the world, there were great multitudes of Christians,

tians, so named from their profession of faith in him, and obedience to him, who could not have been so early, and in such numbers, imposed upon, in an affair of so great consequence, with respect to the reality of the appearance of such a person on earth; and that there was indeed such a person, even the heathen writers attest. The grievous hardships and persecutions under which the primitive Christians laboured, according both to their own and their enemies accounts; and the opposition betwixt the religion they professed and the established customs and idolatries of the world, as well as the natural inclinations of mankind, render it absolutely incredible and inconceivable, that it could have spread so far without some extraordinary methods for its propagation. But it was not propagated by the sword, like Mahometanism; but, on the contrary, the sword was drawn against, and the most grievous deaths inflicted upon its professors. It had no prospects of worldly riches and honours to offer to men, to entice them to embrace it: These lay entirely on the opposite side. It had no support and countenance of men of great genius and learning, for these long stood in opposition to it. Its preachers were men, plain, and for the most part at first, and for many years, illiterate men, who would have been incapable of withstanding the knowledge

knowledge and skill of philosophers and men of learning, if their cause had not been divine; and if these illiterate preachers could have imposed for a time upon the vulgar, the imposture must soon have vanished, like a vapour, as many others have done; and it could not have gained such great enemies on its side, as did in fact afterward espouse it, both for learning and dignity. That books of the New Testament were written about the time they were said to be, because they are often quoted by authors that wrote soon after. In those books Christ and his Apostles are said to have done many great miracles, which they offered as an attestation of the truth of the doctrine they taught, in the most public manner, and before great multitudes of spectators, and often. The primitive Christians, who had the fullest opportunity of being convinced of the genuineness of these books, and the truth of the miracles said in them to be wrought by Christ and his Apostles, were so fully persuaded of them, that they exposed their lives not only to danger, but to actual and dreadful deaths, in support thereof.

Nor could Christianity, under all its foregoing disadvantages, ever have spread so far in the world, if it had not been supported by this, or some other such extraordinary tokens of the divine attestation:

tion: And if those miracles had not been really wrought in that public manner, in which the writings of the New Testament declare that they were, it must have been easy for multitudes to have proved the falsehood of them, which we do not find that they ever attempted. These miracles, therefore, must have been really wrought; but it is absolutely inconsistent with the perfections of God to suppose, that he would suffer them to be wrought in behalf of a falsehood, without, at least, throwing something into the opposite scale to overbalance it, and without giving his creatures an opportunity of detecting the fallacy. The writers of the New Testament related the doctrines of their Lord, and taught the doctrines which they declared that they received by the inspiration of his Spirit, which they supported by such miracles; therefore Christianity, and the doctrines contained in the books of the New Testament must be true and divine*.

Tempter. How knowest thou that there is a God, or that he is such that thou mayst securely depend upon what he has said?

* See Dr. Doddridge's Three Sermons on the Evidence of Christianity. These sermons contain a comprehensive, and judicious summary of the arguments in favour of Christianity.

Believer. Now, O mine enemy, thou hast carried thy malignity to the utmost, and canst not go a step further. That there is a God the works of creation sufficiently manifest: "As every house is built by some man, so he that built all things is God." As well might it be asked, whether I exist? Since, if I do, my Creator must have first existed: Or, as well might it be asked, how I know that I had any such ancestors, whom I have never known? which if I had not had, I myself could have had no being*. God is good, as appears sufficiently in the works of his hands, and the conduct of Providence; but nothing could be more contrary to goodness, than to deceive his creatures; and should he do it, he could have no way to govern them as reasonable creatures; as those that have once designedly deceived others among men, cannot be afterwards credited; and that he is most wise, as well as most powerful, his works equally declare; but it would be most contrary to wisdom, that he should deceive us; it would introduce universal confusion and disorder into his works; nor could he have any motives to it, as he is able, by his mighty power, to bring about whatever purposes he pleases without it. Therefore he

* See Gentleman's Magazine for June 1751, p. 259.

is true, and all his declarations stedfastly to be depended upon.

Tempter. But does he not suffer many of his creatures to remain under great mistakes and delusions?

Believer. It is true, that in many instances he does not effectually interpose to prevent great and dangerous mistakes of his creatures; but then he has not left them under an unavoidable necessity of being deceived, as he would have done, when he attested the truth of the Gospel, by multitudes of great and uncontroled miracles, if it had not been true; and he has given those that are deluded sufficient means to discover the fallacy of those things in which they are deceived.

*The Christian's Converse with his Friends in
the Prospects of Death.*

SOME pious friends visiting him. How do you do, Sir?

Christian. I am very ill, gentlemen; but it is an all wise and most gracious Being that afflicts me, against whom I dare not entertain one repining thought; and blessed be his grace that enables me chearfully to say, "Here I am, let him do
" with me what seemeth him good."

Friend. I am much concerned to see you, my dear friend, in so languishing a state, but rejoice to find you in so resigned a temper. Thus God is honoured by his servants, by their patience and submission in affliction, when they are no longer capable of active service.

Christian. It is, as far as I can judge of myself upon a strict enquiry, my sincere concern to honour God in life and in death.

Friend. I hope he will yet restore, and continue you to serve him upon earth.

Christian. I am not solicitous about the event; but the symptoms attending my disease, and the
D inefficacy

inefficacy of the means that have been used for my recovery, give me reason to apprehend that I am about to bid adieu to this mortal state, and enter upon an unalterable eternity.

Friends. We are much concerned at the prospect of your removal from us, which Providence, indeed, seems to threaten.

Christian. Lament not, my brethren, if God has made me in any degree agreeable or serviceable to you; he can with infinite ease supply the small deficiency which may be occasioned by the removal of so imperfect a creature. And as for me, I rejoice to reflect that I am going to God: The weakness and languishings of nature, and the symptoms of an approaching dissolution, give me no uneasiness, as they are so many delightful signs that the day of my redemption is at hand; and while this prison is gradually falling, its breaches only open to me fairer views of the glories which await me.

Friends. We rejoice with you in the grace conferred upon you, and the comfort which God is pleased to afford you in this time of need.

Christian. I thank you, my brethren; yet imagine not that I have had nothing but comfort under this affliction; on the contrary, I have had a most difficult and painful struggle with the Tempter; he has laboured hard, not only to shake my confidence

fidence in God, but has even dared to attack the foundation of my hope, those everlasting truths on which the whole of my trust is reposed; but, through the grace of the Redeemer, I have been enabled to triumph over him: At present he has left me, but perhaps it is but for a season; lest, therefore, he should renew his assaults, I beg the favour of you to read or repeat to me some passages of the word of God, which your acquaintance with the Scriptures will easily suggest to you, which you imagine most proper for my support and comfort in this needful season.

Friend. Meditate then, my dear brother, on Christ's victory over Satan, as one great end which he had in view in his incarnation, and has gloriously accomplished: This was the tenor of the first promise that God made to fallen man, in the sentence denounced against the serpent: Gen. iii. 15. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." And we are assured, 1 John iii. 8. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil."—How illustrious was the triumph of our Lord when he was tempted! The Prince of this world came, but had nothing in him, as he himself expresses it,

John xiv. 30, probably with a view to the assaults of Satan, which he seems to have had at his death, in the approach of which he says to those that came to apprehend him, Luke xxii. 53. "This is your hour and the power of darkness." But we are taught, Coloss. ii. 15. "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross." And the consolation he affords to his servants, from his victory over the world, may with equal propriety be applied to his victory over Satan: John xvi. 33. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world:" through his conquest have all his servants conquered, that are gone before us to glory. It may with equal truth be said of all as it was said of the martyrs, Rev. xii. 11. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." And it is a most gracious and delightful assurance, that is given to the saints, Romans xvi. 20. "The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Christian. How reviving are these oracles of eternal truth! I triumph in the victory of my Lord! I accept it as the pledge of my own, and expect with pleasure the approaching accomplishment of it. But go on, my dear brethren, draw water for me from the wells of salvation; and may some pious friend

friend that may attend your dying beds, do the same kind office for you.

Friend. Next then, I offer to your view the account which the Scriptures have given us of the death of the Saints. It is a change of our habitation, the taking down of a tabernacle or tent, and a removal to a firm, durable and everlasting house. So the apostle Peter speaks of his own death in a manner as familiar, and with as much satisfaction, as we are used to speak of removing from a mean and inconvenient habitation, to a comfortable and beautiful one; 2 Peter i. 14. "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle." And the apostle Paul, 2 Corin. v. 1. "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands; eternal in the heavens." And, as if the idea of removing from one habitation to another, carried in it something fatiguing, death is represented as a sleep; thus our Lord speaks of the death of Lazarus, John xi. 11. "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." The death of Stephen, violent as it was, is represented under no more alarming characters. Acts vii. 60. "And when he had said this, he fell asleep." It is sleeping in Jesus, 1 Theff. iv. 14. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again; even so them also which sleep in

"Jesus will God bring with him." It is entering
 into peace from a state of warfare and conflict; into
 rest from a state of labour and weariness. Isaiah
 lvii. 2. "He shall enter into peace, they shall rest
 "upon their beds, each one walking in his up-
 "rightness." And again, Rev. xiv. 13. "I heard
 "a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write,
 "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from
 "henceforth: yea, saith the spirit, that they may
 "rest from their labours; and their works do fol-
 "low them." Where this divine sentence seems
 to have been delivered to the apostle by two diffe-
 rent methods of inspiration, at once by an audible
 voice from heaven, and the secret voice of the
 Holy Spirit, for the more abundant confirmation
 of it, and the stronger consolation of the servants of
 Christ in death. It is entering into paradise, as
 our Lord tells the penitent thief. Luke xxiii. 43.
 "Verily, I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be
 "with me in paradise." Nature, indeed, regards
 it in another view, shudders at it as it would at a
 serpent; and at the grave as an enemy: But if they
 must be so regarded at all, death is like a serpent
 bereaved of its sting, and the grave a conquered
 enemy, as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 55 to 57.
 "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where
 "is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the
 "strength

“ strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And what has that soul to fear from such an enemy, that has a part in the tenderest affection of a victorious Redeemer, and is taken under his special and immediate care.

Christian. Your inference is just, and the fears of dying Saints are groundless. But how many, even of the people of God are, through fear of death, all their life-time subject to bondage? Blessed be that gracious Redeemer who came to deliver his people from such a bondage, and has taught such a poor, sinful worm as I am to triumph over the formidable monster. But proceed, my dear brethren, in the labour of love you have so kindly begun.

Friend. The next view then which I offer to you is, that of the happiness of the Saints in a separate state, and the glory of the heavenly world upon which they enter. The angels receive their departing spirits, and convey them to their Father’s house. Thus our Lord tells us in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Luke xvi. 22. “ And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” The Saints are made perfect in holiness, as we read, Rev xiv. 5. “ They are without fault before the

"throne of God." They serve the Lord without weariness or interruption. Rev. vii. 14 and 15.

"They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." They shall see God; thus our Lord says, Matt. v. 8. "Blessed are the poor in heart, for they shall see God."

The inheritance above is the inheritance of the saints in light, where therefore they shall be mingled with angels and saints as their brethren, and everlasting companions and friends. They shall be delivered from death and from every sorrow. Thus it is said, Rev. xxi. 5, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

Christian. And is this the blessed state on which I am entering? This the incorruptible inheritance which infinite grace has prepared for me? With what astonishment, with what joy and triumph does the happy prospect fill me! Lord, what am I, or my Father's house, that thou shouldst bring me to such immense riches, to so glorious an inheritance! Is this after the manner of man, O Lord God! How much higher are thy thoughts than our thoughts, and thy ways than our ways!

Friend.

Friend. Once more, my dear brother, I offer to your attention what the word of the truth of the Gospel has spoken concerning the glory that remains for the saints at the resurrection of the dead and the general judgment. Our Lord says to Martha, John xi. 25. "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." And the apostle tells us, Rom. viii. 2. "If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you: he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth in you." The dead in Christ shall have the precedency at the resurrection, as we are assured, 1 Theff. iv. 16. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." And to this I think I may refer, Rev. xx. 5 and 6. "But the rest of the dead lived not again, until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power:" but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. The bodies of the saints shall be raised a fit habitation for the happy, immortal spirit. Thus I understand 2 Cor. v. 1 to 4. "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have

"a building of God, an house not made with
 "hands, eternal in the Heavens. For in this
 "we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon
 "with our house, which is from heaven." By
 the building of God, the house not made with
 hands, eternal in the heavens, and the house which
 is from Heaven, I understand the glory put upon
 the bodies of the saints, at the resurrection of the
 dead, so called, as being formed by power from hea-
 ven, and appointed for an eternal continuance
 there. And this I am inclined to think to be the
 true sense of this passage, because it adds the greater
 weight to the apostle's reason for not fainting under
 the afflictions and persecutions to which the body
 was then exposed; and especially, because I can-
 not give an easy and natural sense of what follows
 otherwise, "if so be that being clothed, we shall
 "not be found naked." That is, it will be an
 house from heaven, with which we shall be clothed
 upon, received as a special mark of grace as well as
 power from thence; if so be, that being clothed
 afresh with the body, we shall not be found desti-
 tute of the righteousness of Christ, and the inward
 adornings of his spirit. The apostle adds, for we
 that are in this tabernacle do groan, being bur-
 dened; not for that we would be unclothed, not as
 weary of the embodied state, but clothed upon, thus
 gloriously

gloriously adorned when reinstated in a better body; that mortality might be swallowed up of life; that the mortality of the present body might be swallowed up in the eternal life of that body which God prepares for his servants. The bodies of the saints shall be raised free from all this weakness that at present attends them, as we are taught 1 Cor. xv. 42 to 44. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." And again, ver. 52 to 55. "The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality; then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?—The saints shall be equal to the angels. Luke xx. 36. "Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." They shall be like their Lord: Thus the Psalmist

says, Psal. xvii. 15. "As for me, I will behold
 " thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied
 " when I awake with thy likeness." And the
 apostle, Rom. vi. 5. "For if we be planted toge-
 " ther in the likeness of his death, we shall also be
 " in the likeness of his resurrection. Phil. iii. 21.
 " Who shall change our vile body, that it may be
 " fashioned like unto his glorious body, according
 " to the working, whereby he is able to subdue
 " all things unto himself." To which I add the
 words of the apostle John, 1 John iii. 2. "Beloved
 " now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet
 " appear what we shall be: but we know that
 " when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for
 " we shall see him as he is." The saints shall
 come in glory with Christ: 1 Thess. iv. 14. "For
 " if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even
 " so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring
 " with him." Coloss. iii. 4. "When Christ who
 " is our life shall appear, then shall ye appear with
 him in glory." They shall be seated at his right
 hand, publicly honoured and applauded, and all
 that they have done for Christ or his servants taken
 notice of, to their everlasting honour. Matt. xxv.
 23 to 36. "And he shall set the sheep on his right
 " hand, and the goats on his left. Then shall the
 " King say unto them on his right hand. Come, ye
 " blessed

“*blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared
 “for you from the foundation of the world. For I
 “was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was
 “thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger,
 “and ye took me in; naked, and you clothed me; I
 “was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye
 “came unto me.”* When, upon their declining any
 claim to such honourable actions, he explains, ver.
 40. these things as having been done unto the least
 of his brethren, and therefore reckoned as done to
 himself. They shall be assessors with their Lord
 in judging the world, Psal. xlix. 14. “*The up-
 “right shall have dominion over them in the morn-
 “ing.”* 1 Cor. vi. 2 and 3. “*Do ye not know,
 “that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not
 “that we shall judge angels?*

Christian. Animating prospect! blessed hope and
 glorious appearing of the great God, * even our
 Saviour, Jesus Christ! 2 Titus, 13. It fills me
 with joy, as it may well do; and I thank you,
 my friends, for this labour of love. But I am yet
 an imperfect creature; my conceptions of these
 things are far too low, far inferior to their own in-

* The Greek word here translated, *and*, may with equal
 propriety be rendered, *even*; as I have here done, which
 even they must acknowledge who do not choose to go with
 me in this translation.

finite excellence and dignity; and perhaps, before I yet bid adieu to mortality, these blessed prospects may lose their power. Pray for me, therefore, my friends, that God would be with me to the last; and I will endeavour to join with you in the best manner that my present weakness and remaining imperfections will admit of.

Friend. If your weakness will admit of it, after so long a conversation, we will with great readiness.

Prayer offered by One attending a Dying Christian.

“ Most holy and most glorious God! thou art
 “ great above all that we are able to conceive:
 “ Thy perfections are infinite, and thy dominion
 “ is boundless and eternal. The blessed angels
 “ approach thee with reverence, and bow with
 “ profound humility in thy presence; thou stoapest
 “ to regard their services, and hearken to their
 “ praises; which, glorious as they are above all
 “ that we are able to offer thee, fall infinitely
 “ short of thine excellence and majesty.

“ Thou art most holy, the fountain of all holiness: Even the heavens are not clean in thy sight, and the most spotless creatures are before
 “ thee

“ thee, comparatively, unholy things ; yet, from
 “ the height of thy majesty, and glory of thy ho-
 “ lineſs, thou art pleaſed to ſtoop to permit, and
 “ invite even us to approach thy footſtool, who are
 “ as nothing before thee, and whoſe iniquities
 “ compaſs us about. In obedience to the calls of
 “ thy word, and joyfully accepting its gracious
 “ invitations, we bow before the Lord ; confeſſing
 “ ourſelves unworthy to take thy name into our
 “ lips, to lift up our faces to thy glorious, high
 “ throne, in thy ſanctuary above ; and yet much
 “ more unworthy to hope in thy mercy, and rejoice
 “ in thy love.

“ But thou art full of grace, thou haſt ſent thy
 “ Son to take our fleſh, to bleed, and die, as an
 “ atoning ſacrifice for our ſins ; thereby opening
 “ to us a way to God, and emboldening us to call
 “ thee our Father. Through him we approach
 “ thee ; and in the virtue of his ſacrifice, and of
 “ the evidence which thy Spirit has given us, that
 “ through his grace we have truly accepted the
 “ atonement, and bowed to the government of thy
 “ Son ; we rejoice in thy majesty, as an unfailing
 “ ſource of felicity to us, and triumph in thy ho-
 “ lineſs as that of which, we truſt, thou haſt be-
 “ gun to make us partakers ; and as that to which
 “ we hope ſhortly to be, as far as our nature will
 “ admit,

“ admit, conformed. We bless thee for such a
 “ hope ; it is our comfort and our joy in our war-
 “ fare below against this ensnaring world, the
 “ temptations of Satan, and indwelling corrup-
 “ tion.

“ We beseech thee, most gracious Father, (for
 “ so are we humbly bold to call thee) to carry on
 “ the work of thy grace upon our hearts, to pre-
 “ serve us in Christ Jesus, and conduct us to
 “ glory. We are yet within the reach of innume-
 “ rable dangers and enemies ; but we know in
 “ whom we have believed ; thou art almighty and
 “ most gracious. Display thy power and thy love,
 “ to protect us from the evil that is in the world,
 “ and to keep us through faith unto salvation.
 “ While we live, let it be a life of obedience and
 “ submission to thee, of holy zeal in thy service,
 “ and delightful communion with thee. May we
 “ but live in this manner, and we shall not then
 “ be solicitous whether the time of our pilgrimage
 “ be long or short. Continue us in life as long as
 “ thou seest fit, and in whatever circumstances thou
 “ pleasest ; and call us when thou wilt, to exchange
 “ the labours of mortality for the everlasting rest of
 “ thy kingdom. When we come to pass through
 “ the valley of the shadow of death, let us fear no
 “ evil ;

“ evil, be thou with us, and let thy rod and thy
 “ staff comfort us.

“ Look now, O Lord, in abundant mercy upon
 “ thy servant before thee, at thy command lan-
 “ guishing on a bed of sickness, and perhaps of
 “ death. If thou pleasest, we offer it as our re-
 “ quest, that thou wouldst yet raise and restore
 “ him to health and usefulness among us in this
 “ mortal state; but thy will be done, O heavenly
 “ Father, and not ours: If thou wilt remove him,
 “ as the dispensations of thy providence at pre-
 “ sent towards him, give us reason to apprehend;
 “ because we love him, we would rejoice even in
 “ the sorrow of parting with him, that we have so
 “ much reason to believe and be confident that he
 “ is going to the Father; and we beseech thee, in
 “ his behalf, that thou wouldst graciously continue
 “ those manifestations of thy love with which thou
 “ hast been pleased indulgently to favour him;
 “ leave him not in his last moments to darkness
 “ and doubts, nor let Satan be suffered to disturb
 “ his serenity and joy. May he continue to hope
 “ and rejoice in thy salvation, till he is put in the
 “ full possession of it; let the prospects of it brighten
 “ upon his soul, till his faith is exchanged for the
 “ beatifick vision of thy face. Let him honour
 “ thee in death, and be enabled to leave behind
 “ him

" him a lasting testimony to the worth of thy glo-
 " rious Gospel, and to the excellence of thy service,
 " a testimony that may produce the most happy ef-
 " fects on the surviving witnesses of his departure,
 " for the conviction and conversion of sinners, and
 " for the quickening, strengthening, and comfort-
 " ing of thy saints: And when the solemn mo-
 " ment comes, in which he enters into an eternal
 " state, let thine angels receive his departing spirit,
 " and conduct it to thy presence. Let him stand
 " with acceptance and honour before thee, mingle
 " with the spirits of just men made perfect, and
 " rejoice for ever before thee.

" May his dear relatives be taken into the spe-
 " cial care of thy providence and grace, let them
 " trust in the Lord and do good; and thy word be
 " fulfilled, " that verily they shall be fed:" let
 " them delight themselves also in the Lord, and
 " give them the desires of their heart. If thou wilt
 " make the companion of thy servant's life a wi-
 " dow, and his children fatherless, be thou the fa-
 " ther of the fatherless, and the widow's God.
 " Support thine handmaid under the present dis-
 " pensation, and prepare her for, and support her
 " under, the additional affliction of the removal of
 " thy servant, if that is the determination of thy
 " Providence; and enable her to cleave to thee to

" the

" the end ; and may she at length join thy servant
 " again in the regions of eternal blessedness, to be
 " separated no more. Let his children choose their
 " father's God to be theirs, and adhere to their
 " choice ; let them serve thee with a perfect heart
 " and willing mind ; when they want the warn-
 " ings, counsels, watchfulness, and prayers of thy
 " servant. Be thou their guide ; teach them to
 " flee every lust, and to cleanse their way, by tak-
 " ing heed thereto according to thy word, may
 " they stand up instead of thy servant, call thee
 " blessed, and do thee more signal service than he
 " has done ; and when they also enter into an eter-
 " nal state, let thy servant have the joy to see them
 " accepted in thy presence, and cry with unutter-
 " able transport before the throne, " Behold, here
 " am I, and the children which thou hast graci-
 " ously given me, to be with me, the monuments
 " of thy grace, and inheritors of thy kingdom."
 " We present these our requests before thee, in
 " the name of our great Advocate, the Lord our
 " righteousness, through whom we hope for ac-
 " ceptance. To him, with the Father, and the
 " Holy Spirit, be honour and glory ascribed for
 " ever and ever. Amen."

Christian.

Christian. I thank you, my dear brethren, for your kind assistance and your prayers for me, and those dear parts of myself who have been so affectionately remembered before God. Continue your prayers for me while I live; and when I am no more upon earth, continue them for my dear family; and may the God of all Grace give an abundant answer of peace, and bestow the same blessings upon you and your families as you beg for me and mine. And permit me to make it my request, that you would continue the friendship to my family when I am gone, which you have shewn to me, so far as Providence gives you opportunity, and as they themselves shall appear worthy of it; and if you see any of them forsaking the Lord, or turning aside from his ways, admonish and warn them, and remind them, if you find it necessary, that it was my dying request that you should.

Friends. We shall not be unmindful of your dying request; and as you have limited it, we need not scruple to engage, through divine assistance, to do as you have desired; which there may be some times reason to do with respect to the requests of our dying friends, lest they should afterwards involve us in difficulties and snares; but as you must now be fatigued, we take our leave, with the
most

most affectionate wishes for the presence of God with you, in life, and death, and to eternity.

Christian. Farewell, my dear brethren, and may the same gracious presence be your continual support and comfort.

*The Christian's Converse with his own Family,
supposed yet Young.*

Christian.

YE dear parts of my flesh and blood, as I apprehend myself to be about to leave you, in imitation of the ancient saints, I have desired you to assemble round me, not, like them, to predict any thing concerning the future conduct of Providence towards you, with which I am utterly unacquainted, but to bid you adieu, to give you my dying counsels, and commit you to God. To you, my dear wife, I return my affectionate and hearty thanks for all the friendship and kindness, the tenderness and care you have shewn towards me, since Providence brought us into so near a relation. Very pleasant have you been to me, doubling my comforts, and softening my sorrows and cares. I adore that gracious Providence that made you a help-mate for me, and gave me so agreeable a companion in my mortal pilgrimage; may a good reward be given you of the Lord God of Israel, under the shadow of whose wings, I doubt not, you have learnt to trust. Though I have endeavoured,

I hope

I hope, generally to do my duty in our mutual relation, I am conscious of innumerable imperfections, for which I humbly ask pardon of God and you.

Wife. Mention not any thing, my dear, of that nature, with respect to me, I must, on my part, ask forgiveness of my failure in my duty. You have been my affectionate companion and friend. How can I bear a separation! O, that the Almighty would yet restore you! O, that I might die with like evidences in myself of a title to eternal life, with which you are favoured.

Christian. Repine not, my dear, at the disposals of Heaven; I die, but your God lives, who will never leave you nor forsake you; he has been my God ever gracious, ever faithful. Not one good word that he has spoken has fallen to the ground; but all has been thus far fulfilled; as he has been my God, he will be yours too. Walk with him, cleave to him, and keep up the most delightful converse with him. When you have one created comfort less, live more upon the ever blessed Creator, and trust his constant and gracious care. Labour to supply the deficiency of what I might have done, if continued in life, for the everlasting welfare of these dear parts of ourselves, by double diligence in instructing them, admonishing and warn-
ing

ing them, and beseeching them to be reconciled to God. Endeavour to keep them stedfast in attendance upon divine ordinances, in sanctifying the Sabbath, in reading the word of God and in secret duties. Never indulge their inclinations to the ruin of their souls: Labour to keep them from sinning against God, and every thing tending to it; shew them from time to time its dreadful malignity, the ruin into which it plunges many for the present life, and the eternal ruin to which it leads; keep a jealous eye upon them; not only observe those evils in their conduct, the notice of which cannot be avoided, but be attentive that nothing evil may pass unobserved, in order, if possible to reduce them from the first steps in the ways of sin.

Take it not amiss, if any pious friends either reprove them, or acquaint you with their faults, regard it as the part of the truest friendship, and never plead their fatherless state to shelter them from the just animadversions of those that would keep them from the destroyer.

Pray earnestly for them, and pray with them; at least till the age, understanding, and piety of some of them, may render it proper to transfer the work to them; let not the worship of God cease in my house, when I have exchanged my part in it for the nobler worship of the heavenly temple.

Watch

watch over their company, and endeavour to engage them to maintain an acquaintance with my pious friends; who, I am persuaded, will with pleasure transfer the friendship with which they have favoured me to my children, and endeavour to guide them into the paths of life. Labour to instil into them a contempt for the gaities of life, and to teach them to consider themselves as born for a nobler purpose than to run through a circle of vanity.

In the disposal of them, either for learning, or in employments, or marriage, take heed of being seduced by any prospects of worldly advantage, to place them in such situations as may either expose them to temptations, or deprive them of spiritual advantages; place them only in religious families, and, if possible, in families eminently religious, under an evangelical and powerful ministry, and in the neighbourhood of pious persons; in a word, where they may have as many advantages, and as few disadvantages as possible for their souls; though it should be with considerably less encouraging prospects for the present life. Even if they are truly religious, they will need all possible helps, and to be kept, as far as can be, out of the way of danger and temptation: but much more, if there's not an inward principle of grace in their own souls.

E

But

But I cease, as being persuaded of your care ; yet, because I know, that even a mind bent upon the discharge of its duty, needs to be quickened to it, I could not think it improper to give you these dying counsels.

Wife. I thank you for them, my dear ; I am sensible that I need them : but how can I bear the thought of their being your dying counsels ? Or how shall I be able to discharge such various and important duties, when I want your excitement and assistance ?

Christian. The grace of Christ, my dear, is sufficient for you : through Christ strengthening you, you can do all things ; seek supplies from above, and go forth in the strength of the Lord. But as I have but little strength, when I have taken a little cordial, I will turn to my dear children.

My dear lambs, you see before you a dying father ; yet, through the abundant grace of the Redeemer, not afraid of death : I am going to be for ever with the Lord ; and there is nothing that I so earnestly desire for you, as to leave you under the special care of the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Young as you are, my dear children, you must die, as I am about to do. You have seen some of your acquaintance and companions, and some of your brothers and sisters, carried to the
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you ;

grave younger than you : They are fixed in an unalterable and eternal state, as I am now going to be, and as you too must soon be, either in heaven or hell, amidst angels and glorified saints, or amidst devils and damned spirits, either under the smiles or wrath of God. You have, my dear children, immortal souls ; you have begun to be, but you will never cease to be to the endless ages of eternity ; when you die, you will continue after death the same thinking, active beings as you now are, though in a state inconceivably more happy or miserable than at present. You must stand at the judgment seat of Christ ; and as surely as you now see me languishing before you, I shall meet you there ; and how terrible will it be, if I should see you at the left hand of the great Judge, and be a witness against you, that instructions, admonitions, prayers, and tears for you, were not spared, while I was continued among you, but without effect. Remember, my dear children, that you must meet your dying father there ; and yet that will be of no comparable importance to your appearance before the great Judge himself, and to the sentence which you must hear from his lips. If you seek him, he will supply with infinite advantage the want of an earthly father, who is about to be removed from you ; your father's God will be your God too, and

will shew you the like kindness and grace that he has shewn to me.

Cast not off the restraints of your education, when I am no longer with you; remember that God sees you still, and will chastise your disobedience to himself, and to the charges you have received, and now receive from me, when I am no more with you to do it, and in a manner far more dreadful than I could have done. Oh! fear his glorious Majesty, who can kill the body, and cast the soul into hell. If you forsake him, he will cast you off for ever; and how terrible will your condition be, to be forsaken of God, even with respect to this life, perhaps given up to calamity and distress; and under that calamity and distress to have no promises for your comfort, no God to flee to, no heavenly rest to hope for; but to be cast off for ever would be unspeakably more dreadful.

Be afraid, my dear children, of ever contracting any light thoughts of religion, or of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, that great directory in its holy paths, and that sure and only foundation of the eternal hope of those that obey it; and shun, especially in your unexperienced years, the company and converse of those that profanely oppose it, or disregard it. Chuse the company of the saints; let young people that fear God be your only
chosen

chosen companions among the youth of the age; and flee not from the company of old Christians; shun not their admonitions, nor resent their reproofs, but seek their acquaintance, and regard yourselves as honoured by it; but especially cry unto God, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth."

Dread every step in the ways of sin, as it will harden your hearts, grieve the spirit of God, and tend to cause him to withdraw from you. And while you continually pray, "*lead us not into temptation,*" venture not into it unnecessarily, though with ever so firm a resolution not to yield: thus the Devil beguiles many to their ruin. Be diffident of yourselves, and earnestly and constantly seek the direction and care of the grace of God.

You have heard the counsels I have given to your mother; be obedient to her, as you hope for a divine blessing, and would escape from the curse of God; study to be the comforts of her bewidowed state; and, as far as in you lies, to make up her want of me, by applying your hearts to wisdom, and seeking to make progress in it, by your piety and zeal, and by all possible duty, tenderness, and affection to her.

If she and you should be continued in life till she is advanced in years, be you the staff and com-

fort of her age, remember with what tenderness she has watched over your infant years. Slight not her counsels; despise not her infirmities; let her have no reason to complain of your unkindness, your undutifulness, or your neglects; be not ashamed of your relation to her in any company, or upon any occasion; such a foolish pride, instead of recommending you, would expose you to the utmost contempt, and excite the compassion of every humane mind to her. Though you should attain more learning or wealth than she, or converse with persons of a rank superior to her, regard her not as a dishonour, but a blessing to you.

I have endeavoured to make such provision for her, that she may not depend upon you; but that you, on the contrary, may have a dependence upon her; covet not what she possesses, while she continues to enjoy it; seek not to be always drawing from her, much less indulge the most secret desire of her death, that you may possess what I leave her; and if by any unexpected means she should be reduced to a state of dependence upon you, provide for her in the most comfortable manner you can; regard her not as a burden, and assume not thereupon an unnatural kind of superiority; but I hope God will prevent the temptations to which such a case might expose you.

Be

Be always affectionate and tender to each other ; let the elder seek to supply, as far as possible, the place of a father to the younger ; and the younger treat the elder with respect, pay them a kind of filial duty, and hearken to their counsels as far as they are wise and good. Remember these are the counsels and commands of a dying father.

Nor would I leave the world without a word of advice to my servants too.

Remember you have a master in heaven, to whom it infinitely concerns you to shew yourselves approved, whomsoever you serve upon earth, or in whatever circumstances you may hereafter be, you cannot be released from your obligations to serve him : Let not his service be ever neglected on the pretence of business, want of time, poverty, weakness of understanding, or any other pretence whatsoever. The servant, in our Lord's parable, that had received but one talent, was condemned for non-improvement of that one ; who, if it had been improved, would undoubtedly have met with his Lord's approbation, as well as those that had more talents intrusted with them.

Neglect not divine ordinances, secret prayer, or reading the word of God ; nor let these duties be attended carelessly, but with the greatest solemnity,

nity, remembering that God searches the hearts and tries the reins.

When you leave my family, and enter into families of your own, or of other persons; labour, as far as possible, that it may be in such circumstances in which you may have as much advantage, and as little disadvantage as possible, for your souls. If you seek the Lord, he will be found of you; he will be as gracious a friend to you as to those that fear him in the most advanced stations in life, for God is no respecter of persons; in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, no difference made in the distributions of his grace, whatever the rank of those that love him is in the present life.

Remember you have immortal souls to be saved or perish: Oh, mind well their everlasting interests; and remember, that if you perish, your ruin will be greater than that of many others, as you have had greater advantage. And God grant that the religious privileges you have enjoyed in my family, and the prayers that have been offered for you, may never rise in judgment against you to condemn you. But as my strength is much exhausted, I shall add no more but to recommend you all in a few words to the blessing of the Almighty.

O most

O most glorious and eternal God, whom thy grace has taught me, with humble reverence, and grateful admiration, to adore as mine, thy servant yet once more pours out his soul at the footstool of the throne of thy grace, before the delightful appearance which he hopes speedily to make before the throne of glory, in behalf of these dear members of his family, whom he is about to leave. For-sake not thine handmaid, whom thou hast given to thy servant in abundant grace to be an help meet for him in his mortal pilgrimage. Be thou her guide, her support, and her comfort, her shield, and her exceeding great reward. Chear her soul with thy consolations, which are not small under her present and approaching affliction. Let the remainder of her sojourning upon earth be comfortable to herself, honourable to religion, and an eminent blessing to our dear children, and to all her acquaintance; and at last let an entrance be administered unto her abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: And though now we are about to be separated, let us meet before God, with unalterable joy to be separated no more.

I leave, O Lord, my fatherless children with thee, depending upon thy gracious word, that thou wilt keep them alive; O teach them thy

ways, and guide them in thy holy paths ; and permit me to adopt for them the Saviour's dying petitions for his disciples, " Sanctify them through thy
 " truth, thy word is truth ; and now I am no
 " more in the world, but these are in the world,
 " and I come to thee : Holy Father, keep through
 " thine own name those whom thou hast given
 " me. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out
 " of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them
 " from the evil."—I leave them, O Lord, in a
 sinful, miserable world, but I leave them under thy
 gracious care : Be thou their God, as thou hast
 been mine, and shew the like grace to them, which
 thou hast shewn to me, and yet more abundant
 grace.

Nor let those that have served me upon earth
 be forgotten before the Lord ; let them be thy ser-
 vants too, and their names be written in heaven ;
 let them live to God upon earth, and live at length
 for ever with thee above, and for ever adore thee,
 that thy Providence cast their lot in my family.
 Let thy dying servant, O Lord, be still supported
 and comforted from above, restrain the Tempter,
 brighten the dark valley of the shadow of death
 with the light of thy countenance ; administer to
 me an abundant entrance into thy kingdom ; and
 as thou hast, I trust, in some measure, guided me
 by

by thy counsels, now, O Lord, receive me to glory.

Hear, O Lord, and answer these requests of thy dying servant, through that glorious advocate whom I hope shortly to see; and to whom, with the Father and eternal spirit, I hope shortly to ascribe honour, glory and praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Christian's occasional dying Words.

GOODNESS and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and now that goodness and mercy are about to be perfected, not one good word that God has spoken has fallen to the ground; all has been, or is now about to be fulfilled.

To a Person attending him.

I thank you for all your care and tenderneſs; may a good reward be given you of the Lord God of Iſrael. Shortly I ſhall need your aſſiſtance no more.

To a Doubting Chriſtian.

Truly God is good to Iſrael, even to ſuch as are of a clean heart; ſeek to make it ſure that that is your character; be not at reſt while in doubt; give diligence to make your calling and election ſure; pray earneſtly for the witneſſing and ſealing of the Spirit, and be afraid of grieving him. Seek greater
meaſures

measures of grace, which will demonstrate the truth of it more effectually than a thousand enquiries without it; and let not past experiences be overlooked, nor the truth of them always called in question. We do not use to want to have the same thing proved a thousand times over to us in common cases, and should not be always laying the foundation, but pressing on to perfection. You have held out long amidst your doubts, and that is one good sign that your heart is indeed right with God. Take encouragement by my example; I have had my doubts, but through the richness of divine grace, they are all removed now.

To One under Conviction.

O fear the loss of those serious impressions that you have been under, your heart would be thereby so much the more hardened, and the spirit of God the more grieved; rest not in conviction, but remember the necessity of conversion; follow every impression made upon your heart with earnest prayer; dread every step tending to a return to the ways of sin; study the word of God; diligently attend divine ordinances; shun the company of sinners, and every thing tending to erase divine impressions

pressions from your mind ; and chuse the company of the most serious and zealous Christians you know. Intreat their prayers, their counsels, and their admonitions, if at any time they apprehend you in danger of drawing back.

To a Young Christian.

My dear young friend, you are setting out, I trust, for heaven, and I am just passing thither ; I shall rejoice to meet you before the Throne, and welcome you to the illustrious assembly of which, I trust, through grace, I shall soon be a member : Give diligence, that this pleasing expectation may not be disappointed : You are entering upon your conflicts when mine are almost ended : Remember that you have a race to run, a warfare to maintain ; expect not a life free from temptations and struggles, but take up your cross ; go forth in the strength of the Lord ; seek earnestly to maintain your converse with God, you will be in much danger where this is neglected, and find it difficult to regain it ; the more you abound in fervent prayer, in watchfulness against temptation, in jealousy of yourself, and solemn examination of your heart and ways, the safer you will walk.

Watch

Watch and pray against the loss of your first love, and against every thing tending to it. Labour to keep out of the way of temptation, remembering your own weakness; and for your encouragement, remember you are not called to the conflicts and dangers of the Christian life alone, the Lord is with you while you are with him, the Captain of your salvation is engaged on your side, his grace is sufficient for you, and his strength shall be made perfect in your weakness; maintain a constant dependence upon it. Labour to be eminent in religion; aim at great attainments, and seek much usefulness; regard yourself as baptized for the dead, or instead of those that are gone to glory: Labour to supply their places upon earth in zeal and activity for God. You have no greater difficulties to expect than many of your brethren that are entered into glory, or travelling thither, have endured or are now enduring; and soon shall your turn come too to enter into peace. Temptation, corruption, and death itself, have been often conquered through the power of the Redeemer's grace. Hold on, and you shall conquer too; so run that you may obtain; be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

To an Acquaintance, apprehended to be in an unconverted State.

I am now, Sir, about to take my leave of you, and to stand before that Judge, that searches the secrets of all hearts. I have now no mortal interests any more, nor can the favour or displeasure of any man much affect me. Permit me then, Sir, to tell you freely my fears with respect to you, that you are yet in a state of sin and death. As the tree is known by its fruits, your inattention to the great concerns of religion, your neglect of attending ordinances and other duties, your chosen company, your conduct, in many instances, make me fear that you are not a child of God, but are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. I should rejoice to see any evidence that I had been mistaken in these fears concerning you: if I am, it can do you no hurt to warn you; and if I am not, consider the terrors of your condition: You have broken the holy law of God; and while yet estranged from the remedy, you stand exposed to the penalties of it. Can you undergo those dreadful penalties, the weight of which sunk sinning angels to Hell? Can your heart endure, or your hands be strong, when God shall enter into judgment

ment with you? O, count the dreadful cost, and agree with your adversary while you are yet in the way to the great Tribunal. How will you escape, if you neglect so great salvation? If you are not found in Christ, God will mark your iniquities, and how can you stand? You will have not only the breach of the law of God to answer for, but contempt poured upon the blood of Jesus too, deafness to the calls of God in his word and his providence, by his servants and his spirit: And what a fearful account will these things make up? You know that you must die; and I am persuaded you believe, that after death there is the judgment. O think of these things betimes. I say not this to give you any unnecessary uneasiness; not, I assure you, from enmity or displeasure, but from love to your soul, and to warn you to escape from the wrath to come: And I add this, after all I have said, that there is a remedy; your case is not hopeless; the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin, and will cleanse you from your's, if you truly return, and accept of the great atonement.

Pardon, Sir, the freedom of a dying man; he that is speaking his last words had need speak what he thinks to be pertinent and important.

To a dishonourable Professor of Religion.

Them that honour God he will honour; and I am sorry to say, Sir, that in some instances, which you may easily recollect, and concerning which I have affectionately warned you in my health, you have not honoured him. Remember the evidence of a work of saving grace in your soul must be doubtful, in proportion to the degree in which your conversation is not becoming the Gospel. This makes others fearful concerning you, and it should make you afraid concerning yourself, lest you should fail of the grace of God. Hopes of heaven, so far as they want the support of a holy conversation, ought to be suspected. But supposing that your heart is, upon the whole, right with God, and that you should in the issue obtain eternal life; yet this is not to be the single object of your attention. You ought to study to honour God, and recommend religion to others. Can you bear the thought of being an occasion of hardening others in sin by your careless and unbecoming behaviour? Or can you consent to be a grief, a stumbling block, and occasion of doubt to your Christian brethren? O consider, it is not improbable, nor is it any thing unusual, in the course of God's dispensations,

dispensations, that he may frown upon you for these things in his providential conduct, blast your affairs, and load you with distress. At least, you have none of the pleasures of the Christian life to expect, without watchfulness and purity of spirit; think not of communion with God, comfort in the promises and reviving hopes of eternal glory, without a constant concern to walk as becomes the Gospel. And consider in what light an unworthy conduct is likely to appear, in the approaches of death, if you have then the use of your understanding, and your conscience be then awake.

Believe me, the excuses which may now keep you tolerably easy, will not be able to do it at that solemn hour; they will stand forth in all their glaring fallacy, cover you with confusion, and fill you with agony. And how will you be able to meet death with a wounded conscience, and doubtful evidences of your title to eternal life?—O, think of these things now, and make it your concern to adorn your profession.

To a Person too much minding this World.

With respect to me, this world, with all its enjoyments and prospects, is almost at an end; and
how

how inconsiderable a difference would it now make whether I had possessed thousands per annum, or had had no more than my daily bread? Thus, Sir, you know it will soon be with you. Behold then this world, and all that it has to offer you, in the light which death throws upon it, as a vain, transitory, uncertain thing. Let it not then engross your time, your thoughts, and your affections. I blame not your diligence and care, but remember that one thing is needful, that there is another state after this, for which it is infinitely more important to provide. You know not for whom you bestow so much care and pains; have you not seen wealth soon pass into other hands than those who laboured for it designed; perhaps a stranger, or an enemy, may speedily possess the things which it now engages your attention in so great a degree to gather. Are you amused with the thought of having it said, that you died worth such a sum? Will that be any honour to you in the world of spirits, or stand you in any stead before God, the judge of all. On the contrary, will it not make the account before him so much the more dreadful, if you have not been a faithful steward of the bounties of Providence? O learn, learn to use this world so as not to abuse it, so as not to set your heart upon it; be not slothful in business, but be fervent in spirit, serving

serving the Lord. Be diligent, but be liberal too for the support of religion, and for the relief of the necessitous; remembering that you are but a steward, and that you must give an account of your stewardship; and remember, that if any man love the world with a prevailing love, the love of the Father is not in him.

To an exemplary and useful Christian.

My dear brother, I am soon going to bid you a short adieu, and to enter, I trust, into the joy of my Lord. I thank you for the friendship and assistance I have received from you; and I hope shortly to acknowledge you before the Throne, as an instrument which my heavenly Father has employed, by whom he would manifest much grace and tenderness to me. Hold fast, my dear brother, till Christ comes; redouble your watchfulness and zeal; your devotion to God, and beneficence to man. Let no sinners pass unwarned whom you can warn, and reprove without casting pearls before swine. Seek out those that are enquiring after God, to direct, caution, and encourage them. Assist, counsel, and comfort, doubting, discouraged and tempted Christians. Admonish those
that

that are turning aside from the ways of God, or are in danger of doing it. Watch over your brethren, and labour to quicken them, as you have opportunity. Be an example to believers, both in word and deed. Be a zealous promoter of every good word and work. Relieve the necessitous as Providence enables you, and occasions offer. Endeavour to maintain a peaceful temper and disposition in the church, and in the several members of the body of Christ. Do, and bear any thing for Christ's sake; and let not the Tempter ever prevail to make you think that you do more than your part; the less others do, the more you ought to do. As in common affairs, when any work must be done, and in which many are engaged, if some loiter, others must work the harder; so do in this case, remembering that your reward in heaven will be great, and the time is short; yet a little while, and your turn will come too, yea, perhaps a few days or hours, may conduct you to the right hand of God. Now is your salvation nearer than when you first believed, and it approaches every day. Seek to have a heart much in heaven, and soon shall you reach the mansions which Christ is gone to prepare for his servants; and I shall meet you, I trust, with unspeakable delight in the kingdom of God.

To the Standers-by.

O, look upon the things of this world and another, upon God, upon sin, upon eternity, in the light which death throws upon them.

Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly; my race is almost finished, my warfare is almost accomplished, my crown is at hand!

How sad would my case be, if I had lived in neglect of God and eternal things till this time? But I bless the grace of God, that has taught me to mind them long ago.

Blessed Lord, what shall I behold!

Death is hard, but Christ is sure!

If any ask, how I died? Tell them that I died in the firmest belief of the truth and excellence of the everlasting Gospel, and in a chearful expectation of its eternal blessings.

Not one prayer that I ever offered, nor one service that I ever did, or attempted to do for God, is the foundation of my hope of glory, but the perfect atonement, and prevailing intercession of the Son of God.

Farewel, world, and sense, and mortality.—
Welcome, life, God, and angels.

The

*The Dying Christian's Soliloquies, supposing
him to die Sensible.*

NOW my tongue falters, and can speak no more. I shall shortly sing the Lord's song without it. I grow cold, but my heart is warmed with delightful expectation! Poor clod, farewell! Adieu to the earthly tabernacle! a better mansion awaits me! Jesus is gone to prepare it, and stands ready to bestow it.

My breath shortens, it is no matter: I shall shortly live a diviner life without it.

A few moments more, and my bonds will be broken; I shall break through this prison, and exult in divine liberty.

I cannot make my friends sensible what passes within, nor tell them what it is to die. They must themselves make the same experiment. May I meet them before the Throne. These sobs, these convulsions, proclaim my release at hand! Blessed Redeemer, thou waitest to receive me; into thy hands I commend my spirit.

My

My heart has almost ceased to beat, but still I love my Lord, and pant for a sight of his face.

Blessed Jesus, thou hast been sometimes sweet to me in life, thou art sweet to me in death, and thou wilt be yet sweeter to me to eternity !

Whom have I in heaven but thee ; and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever !

Even yet the Tempter endeavours to molest me in this last conflict, but blessed be my Lord that restrains him : Yet a few moments more, and I shall be out of his reach.

Now I see no more, I hear no more, but I think still. I find already that I can subsist, think, and act without bodily senses ! yet a few moments more, and I shall live without the body, in a far nobler manner than I could ever live in it !

What will that life be on which I am entering ? Yet it does not appear plainly ; but it is just at hand ! The veil is almost undrawn, and I shall see my God !

Father, I come to thine house, and to thy embraces ! Receive thy dying child !

F

Was

Was I deceived, or did I see the angels of
God waiting to receive me!—I come, I come,
ye heavenly messengers!—O death, where is thy
sting?

I faint! I die! I go to God!—

*The Christian's Entrance into the World of
Spirits.*

Christian.

IT is finished ! I shout the triumph through the realms of death, learnt from my dying Lord ! But who are these ? The same bright forms I saw a moment past ! Say, wondrous strangers, are ye not angels ? Wait ye not for me ? Am not I accepted ? Your peaceful aspect says I am.

Angels. Welcome, beloved brother ! Sent from the Throne of supreme Majesty, here have we kept thy dying bed, expecting thy dissolving moment, to convey thee to the mansions of the just !

Christian. Your brother, and beloved ! How strange is this ! A prisoner just released from that poor dungeon, thus welcomed, thus attended now ?

Angels. While in that dungeon, thou wast Christ's, whose servants we are too ; and now art thou like us ! Behold thyself ! Glory encircles, and adorns thee, yet unobserved !

Christian. Amazing change ! What am I ? Am I the same ? or am I not another being, specifically

different? A moment past a worm, and now an angel? Can a transition be so quick betwixt extremes so wide?

Angels. Hast thou not read, “former things are “passed away”—and he that sat upon the Throne says, “Behold I make all things new?”

Christian. I know my Father’s word; my hope, my trust, while yet a pilgrim. But never could my earthly thoughts extend themselves to such a change as this!

Angels. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts higher than thy thoughts.

Christian. But why is goodness thus profuse? A meaner form might have adorned a worm, a sinner, and fatherly indulgence yet have suffered no impeachment!

Angels. Thou must appear before the Throne, a Child of God, a Son of omnipotent Majesty, now to receive a crown to which his grace made thee an heir! and it is thy Father’s will thou shouldst appear in suitable array, and bright as the assembly are with which thou minglest! These too are thy triumphal robes; thy warfare is accomplished, thy victory compleat! There flies the baffled fiend, abashed, confounded, to return no more!

Christian.

Christian. Detested foe, am I then freed from thee? Long hast thou tortured, long infested me; wherever I went, I found thee still at hand! I could not shun thee! my danger was incessant! thy darts flew thick about me, and often didst thou wound me, but couldst not slay me: Jesus, my great deliverer, interposed, and sets me now beyond thy reach! Illustrious day! triumphant hour! Flee, hated fiend, thy shame is my immortal joy!

Angels. Thy great deliverer that espoused thy cause, avenges now thy quarrel! See flaming wrath pursues him to the depths of hell!

Christian. I see the dreadful flash, the shaft of pointed flame; how fierce it blazes! dreadful, though distant and levelled at a foe. Thanks to eternal grace, it was not discharged on me; how swift it flies! Vain is the Tempter's speed: It overtakes him, transfixes the monster writhes, and bellows dreadful groans that even distant worlds might hear.

Angels. Such wrath awaits his slaves; but never-fading crowns the conquering soldiers of Christ and thee.

Christian. Let mine be for ever laid low at my Saviour's feet, and my exalted praise proclaim the victory his—but is it then compleat? Is sin no more my inbred foe?

Angels. There lies the flesh in which it had its seat, and whence its motions sprung. With that sin too is dead.

Christian. O death, how groundless was my dread of thee? More just object of strong desire and joyful expectation, that has released me from indwelling sin. Poor tenement of clay, how vainly wast thou loved where such a foe was lodged, and could not be expelled till thou wast broken down. Once loved habitation, I could almost detest thee now, source of my woes, but that thou shalt be re-erected glorious and divine. Shall I then hate thee, whom I loved so much? No, I exult in the prospect of a re-union to thee with such rich advantage: but that blessed period is not yet; why then a further thought of thee at present? Dost thou then still detain me from my Lord Jesus, as in my state of union to thee? Farewel, return to dust, there sleep till the archangel's voice awakes thee. Lead on, ye heavenly messengers, I have no further thought below, I pant to see my God. Yet even here he is; I feel the energy of divine life, the joy, the triumph he inspires, but long to see his throne, and all the hosts of his adorers, with whom I mean to vie in everlasting hallelujahs, for none is more obliged. Full of blest desire, I bid the world a glad adieu.

Angels.

Angels. Such are our orders, this momentary pause indulged to thy surprize on entering a new state of being; further discoveries and more perfect bliss await thee in thy Father's courts. Attend us then, for thou hast pinions now like ours.

Christian. Already we approach those worlds that mortals reckon distant. I ask not who live there, a nobler object fires me with desire. Creatures unknown, ye shall not rival God, nor keep me back one moment from my Lord.

Angels. Becoming resolution. • Happy would learned mortals be, if they beheld these objects with such views as thine.

Christian. Mine once were low like theirs, and scarce surmounted curious speculation; but death has taught me a diviner lesson.

Angels. These worlds too, at the proper period, thou shalt know. Thy God now calls thee, whom thou desirest to see.

Christian. This is activity worthy of immortals bound on so high concerns as mine. How fast we mount, and leave the lingering sun-beams far behind! It is dwindled to a star, and other suns blaze round us; these dwindle too. Others succeed, whose beams never reached that world from which I came, that dwindle in their turn; and now we reach the limits of creation, and bid the mighty fa-

brick all adieu.—But who are these that meet us?
These splendid forms that shame the numerous
suns that we have past?

Angels. These are thy brethren, thy once loved
company on earth, thy relatives while mortal, that
haste to welcome thy arrival, and attend thee to
the Throne! Dost thou not know them now?

Christian. Yes, well I know them; but, oh,
how changed? So, but less glorious, from the sight
of God Moses descended, while Sinai flamed
above, and veiled the abiding ingrained glory too
strong for mortal view. But I behold these hea-
venly forms undazzled now.

Maria. My Father (such was thy flesh to mine,
though we are spirits now) welcome to this blessed
state, to which grace infinite snatched me from thy
longing arms before I knew to lip the tender name.
Foremost in rank of those that loved thee, I haste,
with this my sister, younger some months in be-
ing, to bid thee welcome to the seats of bliss.

Cleora. Accept my welcome too, dear, tender
father of my mortal flesh, whose heart once ached
with sympathetic woe, while a fierce fever had dis-
solved the texture of my blood, and forced the
crimson torrents from my eyes. Such seeds of
strong corruption were sown in the poor flesh I
dropped, as would have made my trial dreadful.

My

My mighty Former, therefore, with unutterable grace, cut short my trial ere it was begun, and bid me triumph ere my foes approached.

Christian. Those melancholy scenes are now no more, nor flowing streams disguise thy infant cheeks again. United pustules no more disfigure my Maria, and throbbing anguish breaks not my heart again. What glorious change adorns you, my fair offspring, now ; and joy unmeasurable succeeds my former grief. Ah, could I grieve so bitterly when you were rescued early from unnumbered snares, and received to dignity like this : but I was mortal. Now ye are mine again, nor can the shaft of death dissolve the near relation. Blessed be eternal love, that destined this re-union, and decreed it indissoluble.

Johannes. Dear brother of my flesh, with these fair spirits, once our sisters, I claim the next congratulation. Our separation has been longer, yet in these realms of joy we loved you still. With joy we saw you struggling through a crowd of strong temptations, panting for immortal bliss ; and with unutterable delight, behold you here at last, while yet our other brothers are on the way behind.

Christian. Ye amiable spirits, I thank your mindful love, and see with rapture so many of my

F 5

earthly

earthly family favourites of grace: While others are pilgrims still, hereafter to arrive and render the joy, already wonderful, compleat.

Senior. I, and these venerable spirits with me, thy ancestors, with joy embrace the permission given us to bid thee welcome to our high abodes. Blessed be the Lord that thus has led so many sprung from us to eternal bliss.

Christian. Joy correspondent overflows my raptured thoughts, to meet in this exalted state my loved progenitors, and see the far extended blessing thus compleat. Eternal thanks to boundless mercy, that suffered not the blessed entail to be cut off in me, perhaps to be extended further.

Pius. Though I give place, my much loved friend, to these rejoicing kindred of thy flesh, yet not in love, which our joint union to our Head kindled on earth; nor in my joy to see the dear companion of my mortal toils arrived to endless rest.

Christian. Dear partner of my soul, thou didst outrun me, and didst first obtain thy crown; but we will join again, not now in prayer, in feeble counsels, and in long complaints, but in eternal hallelujahs to our glorious Father, to the once bleeding, dying Lamb, whose love constrained us, and renders now the friendship perpetual. But
while

while we converse thus, I see a blaze of glory
outshining yours, ye perfect spirits, and yours,
angelick convoy, as much as ye outshone the suns
I passed.

Angel. The almighty Trone, and all the ador-
ing host are now in view.

Christian. Surprise, awe, ransport inexpressible
by the tongues of angels, seize me, increāsing still
as I approach. Oh, whither will it rise? The
mighty ocean would have overflown the shores of
flesh, and drowned mortality !

*The Christian's Appearance before God.**Christian.*

SEE from his throne my advocate descends; I know him by his mangled hands, his wounded side, his scarred temples, and his gracious smiles: He holds a crown of life, he comes to place it on my head, and to present me faultless to the Father. Blessed Jesus, thou art all stupendous love, and I the trophy of thy bleeding heart and thy triumphant grace, am all astonishment, and grateful joy.

Christ. Father, behold another monument of thine abundant grace, given me to redeem, to fit for glory, and present before thee compleat in me. Behold the accomplished purpose, the prize I purchased! the fruit of pregnant grace come to maturity; thy child adopted, and in me anew created; by nature once a child of wrath, corrupted, fallen, and to thee an enemy in his mind by wicked works. From innate sin unnumbered poisonous branches shot, hateful to thee and me, thine image. His childhood was pollution, his ripening years perverse

perverse rebellion ; instances of both were innumerable, till thine almighty grace subdued his heart ; and ever from that happy period, in which I saw in him the travail of my soul, there yet was found remaining sin : The flesh ensnared the mind, the world enticed him, Satan, ours and his adversary, oft prevailed. The calls of thy wisdom, sent by temporary means, and mortal instruments, and by thy holy spirit, produced not full effects ; thy chastisements, thy smiling providences, and all the methods boundless wisdom took, brought indeed some fruit, but not proportioned to their riches. His worship oft was formal, wandering, cold, and ever far beneath the glory of thy nature, and those vast obligations under which thou laidst him. This has he oft acknowledged at thy footstool, while yet a pilgrim in a sinful world, and will now acknowledge it anew.

Christian All this, unspotted Majesty, have I offended, deserved thy wrath, and ill repaid abundant grace, times without number.

Christ. But, holy Father, while thou seest his transgressions, behold in me his surety. I, my own self, have borne his sins in my own body on the tree ; on me thou laidst them, I paid the debt he owed to justice : Look back to Calvary, the scene of my appointed sufferings ; there I bore his
name

name upon my heart; for him my head was crowned with thorns, my hands and feet were pierced, my wounded side poured out atoning blood, and purifying water: Behold the bright memorials of my sufferings, remember all the dying pangs thy dearest Son has borne for him; on me be all his guilt, me his surety and his advocate. Thus have I often pleaded for him, while yet he was a pilgrim, and thou hast heard the plea: Now, O holy Father, I present him at thy throne, and renew the oft-prevailing plea.

Father. I will be merciful to his unrighteousness, and his sins and his iniquities will I remember no more. Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

Christ. Father, I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou always hearest me; but for his sake I said it, and for the sake of all the inhabitants of heaven, that all may know the never-failing love I bear to every one that loves me. And further plead; for him I purchased an eternal crown, my blood the price; and by thy grace he has been sanctified; thy spirit has convinced him of his sin, and has taken of mine, and shewed it unto him, that he might glorify me. He has had his fruit unto holiness. By thine assisting grace, he mortified

fied the flesh with its affections and lusts; he overcame the dragon by my blood; the conflict was hard, and his failures many, but he continued his warfare bent on conquest; when he fell, he rose again, for thou upheldst him with thy hand. Nor was his conflict without progress, sin, the cursed foe, lay dying, though it struggled long. He did thy will sincerely, though imperfectly; he poured his daily cries before the throne, which I presented daily with abundant incense; he loved thy name, feared its dishonour, and pursued its glory: He beheld the transgressors, and was grieved, because men kept not thy law; he pitied souls that loved the way to death, and fought their rescue, and mortal wants and woes excited his compassion. Thou gavest him worldly goods, and when he saw his brother's need, he shut not up his bowels of compassion; nor only said. "be warmed, be filled," but gave with the pleasure which thou taughtest him. His brother trespassed, and, as by me thou gavest commandment, he pardoned the offence, and studied to do good for evil. He loved thee as his Father, me as his Saviour, and saints of every name as brethren. Such was the efficacy of thy grace while he was compassed with infirmities. Now I present him in thy sight, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Father.

Father. Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

Christ. I thank thee, Father, faithful was thy word. In him I see the travail of my soul, and am satisfied, while this new member is completely joined to me, his vital head.

Christian. Eternal Father, what shall thy servant say, overwhelmed with gratitude unutterable, lost and confounded with surprizing grace? So great, so boundless my offences, yet forgiven; so mean my service, yet with prodigious bounty crowned; and my Lord's joy assigned a worm to whom eternal agony was due! Such grace is thy peculiar glory, thy high prerogative, faintly attempted in thy earthly courts, but sung with everlasting rapture by all the adoring myriads round the Throne. Now shall my feeble love, inspired by thine, burn strong and bright before thee, and my faint praises while below, vie now with thy most noble worshippers. I am infinitely obliged, not one of all thy numerous sons has greater cause to love thee. And thou, dear amiable Lord, kind beyond the skill of angels to express, my great Emmanuel, I pay thee my poor tribute, for thy love exceeds, and ever will exceed the praises of eternity. Bright and immortal honours, well merited, are thy high distinction over all the sons of
God,

God, thou makest my bliss eternal, and I will aid these glorious hosts to make thy praise eternal too. Nor shall thy praise be silent, eternal Spirit; had it not been for thy gracious influence to me, my Lord had died in vain; the oracles, by thee inspired, sounded in vain to me; in vain they thundered, in vain they charmed, for I was deaf and dead, till thou, Spirit of Life, in Christ, my Lord, didst bid me live, (blessed, ever memorable time!) didst breathe on me, dead as dry bones, long dead, and very dry; and boundless was thy succeeding patience, when I vexed and grieved thee; and oh, (fool as I was!) yet did it, after thou hadst sealed me to this illustrious and redeeming day. When I grew cold in prayer, formal in praise, and void of taste to the sacred sweets of drawing near to God, thou often hast renewed the relish and the feast. When compassed with temptations, I stood an easy prey, oft hast thou roused my holy fear, thou the enlivening principle of all my conflicts, and donor of every victory. By thee I was preserved amidst ten thousand dangers, and now I stand the trophy of thy grace before the Throne, thus greatly blest.

Christ. Thy praises are accepted; and now, ye sons of God, receive your new companion.

Heavenly Chorus. Brother beloved, part of ourselves, thy joy is ours; thy triumph, thine arrival
here,

here, and thine acceptance, add to our bliss. We all are friends to thee, servant of God, and friend of Christ, incorporate with us. There is not a spirit in the plains of light but loves thee, and will for ever love thee. We all are one in Jesus; he the dear head, we his body, and thou a member with us. Each of us will instruct thee in what our experience here has taught us, and what almighty mercy has done for us. We join thy triumphs, and assist thy praise.

Most gracious Lord, we bless thee not for ourselves alone, but for this new companion of our bliss, to most of us unknown on earth, but not less dear as partner of thy grace, and bearing thy bright image. Dearest Emanuel, thy streams of holy blood, which bought us all, spread wider still, and bring to this assembly new acquisitions. Triumphant still, amidst the ravages of sin, thou raisest new trophies to thine endless praise. With rapture all thy purchased servants see the bright assembly growing. Exhaustless source of life, the vital energy that reigns in heaven, yet reaches those mansions of the dead, from which thy ransomed came, and quickened the tenfold death of sin, in which thy creature man was held. Thy spirit (be its grace for ever praised!) creates new sons of
God,

God, forms new heirs of bliss, and with incessant care matures them for it, and conducts them to it, trampling on all the power and spite of hell, and teaching worms to conquer angels.

Pious Ancestors. While all thy sons, gracious God, shout their benevolence and gratitude on this delightful day, we have peculiar praise to pay for the distinguished honour done to us, that thou hast conducted to thy Throne a spirit once united to flesh that sprung from us. Why were we honoured, that from us an heir of immortal bliss should descend? Behold thy servants here, ourselves monuments of miraculous grace, but rapturous addition! Here is the child which thou didst give, not to support our name and memory on earth alone, when we forsook it, but to partake our joys, to aid our praise, and spend with us a blessed eternity.

Pious Friends. Nor can the general praise content us, Lord, when thou hast brought this our loved friend to glory. Thanks for the pleasing hours we spent with him on earth, once partner of our trials and our strife, but now of life and joy. Here will we talk of all thy wondrous works together: here we renew the sweet society we had on earth, immensely sweeter now; and the joint
prayers

prayers we offered there shall now be for ever exchanged for emulating praise.

Christ. Ye sons of God, now worthy that high character, the Father smiles, and all your praises are before him, an offering of sweet smelling favour.

*The Sinner appearing before God.**Abdiel.*

THOU greatly favoured, man much beloved by God and angels, thine approbation past, see a new opening scene, which will exalt the joy and gratitude for thy salvation yet higher, to us indeed not rare, but new to thee. In the same tract of space through which thou camest, another object widely different glares; a sinner dragged on reluctant by insulting fiends, approaches our abode to hear his dreadful doom. See the almighty Throna, not mild and peaceful as at thine arrival, circled with dusky wreaths of vengeance, and flaming fierce and dreadful, more dreadful than when Sinai burnt, as flaming cities exceed the flying spark.

Christian. Infinite awe possesses me; now should I tremble, if spirits approved could tremble: but I am safe, thanks, endless thanks, to pardoning mercy and my Saviour's blood.

Abdiel. The prisoner stops; not nearer may malignant spirits come; all heaven suspends its songs, and stands in awe; dreadful thunders roar, as though

though a thousand worlds rushed on each other ; high waves the flaming sword ; Jesus appears, not now the gracious advocate, but the tremendous judge ; and in those dreadful thunders judgement begins.

Christ. Accursed spirit, hear thy doom ; and ye inhabitants of heaven attend his crimes, and the just sentence I pronounce. His early childhood was a scene of universal vanity ; this is the lightest charge, for it was more ; stubborn rebellion against God, the parents of his flesh, and every faithful monitor. His youth was more confirmed iniquity : Sinners were his beloved company ; he chose their ways, desired their applause, and with the keenest avidity pursued their gratifications. Nor was he led alone in sinful ways, himself became a leader ; already some are sunk to hell, whose progress thither he forwarded ; and others, with whom heavenly patience yet bears, pursue the cursed paths he led, bound to destruction too. Reason now opening ; conscience not yet become insensible, by my command warned and expostulated, but quite in vain. My spirit strove, but he resisted obstinately. He saw his young companions bid adieu to time and vanity ; and on their dying beds he saw them trembling, and heard them cry to me for mercy, and warn him to be wise. The first
tremendous

tremendous spectacle alarmed him, but his goodness passed away like the morning cloud, and fled as the early dew. A second spectacle of death and wrath in triumph gave him less alarm, and those which followed none. He saw, he heard, but was immoveably fixed in his sins. When death in others warned him without effect, I cast him into a bed of pain; death seemed approaching; and then, indeed, the rebel trembled, cried aloud for mercy, sent for my servants, heard their admonitions, asked their prayers, and in deep alarm vowed a return to God. But as soon as ever my hand was staid, and death appeared to flee, he turned again to sin, like the washed swine, to wallowing in the mire. My servants that had witnessed his alarms and vows, as faithful friends, attempted to revive the memory of them, and warned him to beware, but then he stopped his ears, resisted their reproofs, fled from their company, and shunned their friendly aid to save him. A second time I smote him, but then his heart was flint. A rousing ministry warned all around, and both public ministrations and private personal reproof, bid him take heed; sometimes he heard in public, but hated private warnings: Grace and salvation were proclaimed and offered, but wrath and grace were vain: my blood, my tendered pardon, my command,

mand, my promises and threatenings, were all disregarded. What could I do more? But every salutatory method failed to reclaim him: he grew more hard, and ran yet greater lengths in sin. At length the hour arrived that wisdom fixed for patience to endure; and death, by my command, has brought him to my bar, to hear his righteous doom. Say, rebel, hast thou ought to plead?

Sinner. My lusts were violent, and my temptations great.

Christ. These then thou ownest thy Lord's, whom thou wouldst serve instead of me, whose dictates thou wouldst hear instead of mine. Didst thou not know that I had called my servants to a warfare, and couldst thou hope to conquer without fighting, and without continuing to do it? Numbers of these my servants once had lusts and temptations strong as thine, and a harder conflict than that to which I called thee, yet they have conquered: but thou lovedst thy sins.

Sinner. Lord thou with-heldest thy grace from me.

Christ. I gave thee reason, which, if duly used, would have taught thee to enquire, where is God my Maker? I sent my servants to admonish thee, my word to teach and warn thee, my spirit strove with thee, but thou didst resist the Holy Ghost. I
told

told thee that my Father would give the holy spirit to them that asked him, but thou wouldst not ask ; or when thou didst, desiredst it not, nor sought to obtain it. How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings ? But thou wouldst not. Nor can my special grace to some, be thine excuse, since thou hadst help offered thee abundantly sufficient ; but wouldst not seek it, which thou couldst have done.

Sinner. I thought that thou wouldst not have been so severe, for thou art gracious.

Christ. True, I am gracious : thou thyself hast been a monument of it ; but thou abusedst my grace, and I often reminded thee that it would not always wait : I warned thee of the sinner's portion ; I threatened thee : And couldst thou think that I would not fulfil the threatening ? Which should stand, my word, or thy imagination, in contradiction to it ? Couldst thou suppose my grace and truth to be opposite to each other ? Thou wouldst be ruined ; bent on thine own destruction, thou madest thyself incapable of bliss. And to confound thee to the utmost, grace cannot save thee ; grace itself condemns thee. Should I receive thee to these spotless realms, polluted as thou art ; thou couldst not relish heaven, it would be a hell to thee : Here one eternal Sabbath is observed ;

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these

These are the realms of holiness, and none but saints possess these blissful seats employed in everlasting worship. Thou knowest thou couldst not bear these things on earth, how could thou bear them then where they are perfect and eternal; and it would spoil the bliss of these my friends, to have un sanctified companions: their righteous souls were vexed with such on earth, and thou wast one that grievedst them there. Wouldst thou pursue them even to heaven? Grace itself forbids it; it would be no grace to thee to admit thee where thou wouldst be for ever restless; and grace to these my saints forbids the interruption of their bliss by such unfit companions.

Sinner. I did design to turn to thee at last, but thought thou wouldst not call so soon.

Christ. Just now thy plea was, head-strong lusts and violent temptations: say, couldst thou think that these would weaken by indulgence? Thou didst design to turn; why then didst thou refuse to do it while the work was easier? And was it fit that all thy prime of life should be consumed in sin, and thy decrepid days should be my allotment? Was that detested slavery so much preferable to my most reasonable service? But thou sayest thou thoughtst I would not call so soon: Did not I wait for many years? Did I not warn thee that I should
come

come at last as a thief in the night? And didst thou not behold how oft I summoned others to this great tribunal earlier than thou art summoned, earlier by far? Thus all thy pleas are vain. If thou hast ought to add to excuse thy guilt, and shelter thee from wrath, let all the inhabitants of heaven hear: Its utmost weight shall be allowed it.

Sinner. Oh, horror inexpressible! Torture! Despair! Devouring anguish! All my pleas are over-ruled; their vanity glares full upon me. What shall I say? Ah, nothing, nothing, Lord.

Christ. Hear then thy doom, already heard in vain, while an escape was open. Depart from me thou cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Sinner. Hell and damnation without end! Oh, punishment too great to be endured! Eternity! Tormenting word! Why do you lash me, furies? Why instantly begin your tortures, ye infernal fiends? What not one moment's pause?

Devils. No, not to all eternity.

Sinner. Oh, wretch forlorn! damned and lost for ever!

Christian. Tremendous scene! Those accursed fiends drag the wretch far into darkness. This too was my desert in all its horrors. There he must groan in endless anguish, anguish well deserved.

But I am a Saint in glory. Lord, how is this !
I am all astonishment. With endless rapture I
will adore the grace that rescued me, distinguished
grace ; else I had perished too. Aid me, ye blessed
inhabitants of heaven ; the praise I owe exceeds
what I can pay.

Grand Chorus. With joy, beloved brother, see
millions of spirits gathering round thee ; for we
have all the same acknowledgments to make ; and
thou, immortal Watts, shall lead the song.

Watts and the Grand Chorus of Heaven.

Each of us cry, with thankful tongues,
Lord why was I a guest ?
Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room ?
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come.

*Heavenly Emulation.**Christian.*

YOUR rapturous melody, ye amiable spirits, charms me beyond expression : I have learnt the heavenly air, and with this song will fill eternity. You charm me too that you will borrow praise from earth, and make the heavenly Temple ring with the sweet songs that fill God's earthly courts. But, O, ye heavenly friends, there is one thing charms me infinitely more : Emmanuel smiles gracious approbation. Dear, condescending Lord, our highest honours are thy righteous due, could we ascend to strains ten thousand times more noble, and thou stoopest immensely to attend even heavenly praise.

But, ye bright Sons of God, what mean ye when ye say, that you have all the same acknowledgments to make ? The same, indeed, in kind, not in degree ; for, surely, none amidst this mighty chorus is indebted like me.

Gardiner. So too said I with greater cause ; so thousands say when first they enter these abodes ; but thou shalt learn as they have done, that we

have equal obligations ; and I, among the rest, can tell of grace equal or superior shewn to me ; but should I fail, myriads of eager spirits stand round, that will not own thee more obliged than they. Begin the miracles of grace to thee, and I have equal miracles to tell.

Christian. Heroic spirit, I know thee, just known on earth, and think with vast delight of spending an eternity with thee. I know thy wondrous story, learnt on earth from Doddridge *, sacred spirit, whom I see in prime distinction amidst these hosts of sons of light, and will haste to embrace him when I have made thee yield in praise ; for, dear Gardiner, I will not yield to thee. I was descended from the friends of Christ ; illustrious honour, though not peculiar. My earliest years were taught, with utmost diligence, the eternal and fair paths of life. The unfeigned faith which dwelt in those from whom I sprung, spoke loud and earnest, and with melting tenderness, to call my soul to God, as soon as its wanderings began, and well-judged terrors to a tender mind were planted in my way when entering on the paths of sin. Fervent, unwearied cries arose to God ; unnumbered every

* See Dr. Doddridge's Life of the honourable Colonel James Gardiner,

where, but in his own vast volume of remembrance ; arose while I was bent on ruin, and rushing eager to destruction ; my childhood most perverse, most deaf to admonition, deaf to the voice of love and tears.

Gardiner. Thus far thou wilt acknowledge my well known story equals thine, and I have all the same acknowledgments to make.

Christian. I own it, blest inhabitant of heaven ; yet these distinguished favours must not pass forgotten by thee or me, in the high praises that we owe ; other abundant means were used to bring me to the Lord, far more than many others had, or than, perhaps, thou thyself. But herein grace to me was more abundant, that I was earlier called to God than thou wast, while sin was hastening fast to cursed maturity, a heavenly wind stopped the malignant fruit.

Gardiner. So much the more did grace to me abound, that sin not hastening to maturity, but having reached it, was cut off by an Almighty hand. I was a brand plucked from the burning, a wretch snatched from the gates of hell, and led to heaven. Here then the contrast is betwixt an earlier call to God, from less excess of sin, and a deliverance from enormous guilt.

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Christian.

Christian. And canst thou doubt, illustrious spirit, in which grace most abounds? Which wouldst thou have chosen for those thou once lovedst best on earth?

Gardiner. Undoubtedly, the first; but where greatest crimes are pardoned, and strongest habits are subdued, there, surely, grace has triumphed most.

Christian. Here let the inhabitants of heaven judge betwixt us; but by thine own acknowledgment, I am most indebted to the grace that saved me; for thou, when called to God, wast obedient to the heavenly voice, and from that blissful hour didst walk with God; but I was strangely stubborn, and made far worse returns for saving grace than thou. But sins against that grace that rescued me were far more heinous than thine before conversion; that I am pardoned then is yet more boundless love than that displayed in thy forgiveness.

Gardiner. Thou knowest not, heavenly spirit, how far, how often I offended when brought to God; but be it as thou sayest, here I retort thy argument, and ask which was the greatest blessing to be taught, to adhere to God, or to have frequent wanderings pardoned?

Christian.

Christian. And I retort thy own reply. Thus far the account might then be balanced but that the pardon of offences done against the grace that had renewed me, was yet more surprizing than of sins whilst thou was yet unchanged.

Gardiner. Ah, brother, which is greatest grace, that which redeems from gaping hell, or that which finishes salvation when begun? Or which was hardest to forgive while we were mortals, an enemy's provocations, or a child's infirmities?

Christian. Thou softenest my offences, but they were great, and there were mighty aggravations in them, greater than in thy infirmities; so much greater, as the snares to which I was exposed were less, and herein grace to me abounded; my Father knew my weakness, and as my strength was small, he called me forth to trials less than thine.

Gardiner. Which then was greatest grace, to have an easier trial, or be taught to stand amidst the dangers of a greater?

Christian. Which shall I call the greatest, when in both appointments almighty grace preserved?

Miranda. Neither of you prevails; but I have greater grace to tell than you. You were instructed early in the paths of life, nor was the instruction fruitless, though it attained not its design at first. But I, a wretched outcast, for whom no

man cared; the voice of heavenly truth saluted not my ears, no prayers were offered for me, no melting arguments or tears were used to bring my soul to God; instead of this intemperate rage, intoxicated mirth, polluted and blaspheming language bellowed where I first drew my mortal breath: Prodigious snares for tender youth, productive of eternal ruin to innumerable souls! But I was rescued from the danger early; surprizing Providence removed me from the house of her that bare me, and placed me in the family of blest Evangelist; there first I learnt eternal truth, and felt its holy power. Thus I was singled out for mercy, one of a family, the youngest too, with dangerous examples set before me by those that entered life earlier than I. Christian thou knowest these things, and other happy spirits here. There stands Evangelist amidst these shining hosts, the witness and instrument of boundless grace conferred on me: Say then, ye emulating spirits, is not Miranda more indebted to almighty grace than you?

Christian. I see that holy man, whom our almighty Father appointed to direct my early youth and thine. Well hast thou told the grace that plucked thee from the jaws of ruin: I own the mercy great, and from this blissful hour will join in all thy hallelujahs to the grace that saved thee.

It is fit that those should join in heavenly anthems that began to run nearly together, and helped each other's race. But, blest Miranda, wilt thou not own that I am here a greater miracle of saving grace than thee, more favoured from my childhood with early admonitions, more bent on ruin; God called thee, and thou heardst almost as soon as called; but I was often called, and often turned a disobedient ear, yet made at last to hear, pardoned and saved?

Miranda. How can I own it? But for that dispensation, I had been lost for ever. My danger far exceeded thine. My everlasting welfare seemed to hang on one event; but when one method failed for thy recovery, a thousand more were ready to be tried.

Christian. Were ready, didst thou say? A thousand ways were tried; and but for boundless grace had all been unsuccessful. Whose heart was hardest then? thine that obeyed the earliest summons, or mine that stood against a thousand? And which of us was the most illustrious monument of the grace that bore our manners, that pardoned and delivered us from ruin? Besides, fair spirit, if both had perished, (tremendous thought which makes us almost shudder even in heaven!) my condem-

nation must have been with deeper horror far than thine.

Servata Well have you told, dear partners of eternal life, the wonders of the grace that saved you ; but you resided where the Gospel shone in noon-day splendor ; I in a land of light indeed, but in so dark a corner, that little but its name was known to me, or my unhappy neighbours. Eternal grace beheld me in my darkness, and bid a beam of sacred light dart in upon me, and direct me to a clearer day. And shall I tell the wonderful awful truth ? That beam of light reflected on me from one that was himself in darkness, a hypocrite, a sinner much abandoned to his lusts, as soon appeared, that wore the mask of piety, was made the instrument to guide my soul to God. Christian, thou knowst it, and canst thou vie with me ?

Philothecos. Thy story, *Servata*, is surprizing ; but I alike involved in darkness, hated the light ; and when it first began to shine where I inhabited, I with detestable malignity sought to extinguish it. Child of the devil, enemy of all righteousness, was my most righteous character ; yet my closed eyes were opened, eternal light broke in ; my hardened heart was softened, my stubbornness subdued, and I became a trophy of that grace I strove to hinder others from receiving.

Thaumasios.

Thaumastos. Thus far these happy spirits vie with thee, blest stranger ! But I, a monument of more amazing grace, was visited by heavenly light, even in a land of darkness, like that descending star that guided eastern sages to our infant Saviour. Taught, without ministers and sacred records, by the Eternal Spirit himself, from the deepest lethargy he roused me ; while all were bound in sleep around me, revealed an unknown God, shewed me my sins, and opened hidden stores of pardoning grace. Whenever I roved bewildered, his voice recalled me, directed the path in which I ought to go ; and thus from thickest gloom guided me to these bright mansions. Thus we, and thousands more amidst these shining hosts, have grace as wonderful to tell as every stranger spirit that arrives in heaven. Without deciding then which of us stands most indebted to saving grace as separate members of this blest body, let our united hallelujahs, as of one family, ascend before the throne, a tribute justly due for our union in perfect bliss. And see the whole assembly of the Lord's redeemed, address themselves with golden harps and rapturous voices, to make the heavenly temple echo loud with praise.

Grand

astos.

Grand Chorus of Heaven.

Eternal Father ! thine adoring sons present themselves, secure of fatherly acceptance, to bless the wonders which thy grace has wrought in all, whether those called in earlier or in later ages of the earth ; from lands and families involved in thickest shades, or visited with heavenly light ; from sin arrived to cursed maturity, or nipped in early bud ; we stand myriads of miracles, which thine almighty grace has wrought, each for ourselves and for our brethren. Men wondered at, and wondering at ourselves, we offer our united praise, as the several members of one glorious body, fitly joined together, and compacted under our divine head, thy first begotten Son Emmanuel. Chosen in him from our first father's ruined race, and from the midst of thousands lost, to escape the wide-spreading ruin, predestinated to be sons, and ransomed by the blood of Jesus, the great sacrifice that satisfied for all our sins. By various wonderful methods, at the happy day prefixed by eternal love, thou broughtest our souls to God, scattering the darkness of our minds ; thou saidst, as in the first creation, " Let there be light," and it was so ; the day-spring from on high arose upon us, the earnest
of

of this eternal day. Thou drovest the infernal Tyrant from the throne he held within us; didst break the fetters of our servitude, and blest the slaves of Hell with divine liberty. Innumerable sins forgiven, thou madest us members of the household of Faith, becamest our Father, and madest us worms thy sons and daughters. Yet after grace so boundless, we ill-requited thee, in instances too numerous to be recounted, mourned for on earth, and now remembered, to the glory of paternal grace that pardoned us. Thou too didst heal our backslidings, didst ease the agonizing wounds of conscience by the blood of Jesus, and give us peace, the emblem of that endless peace on which we now are entered. Thou didst reduce us from our wanderings, keep us from leaving thee for ever, make us triumphant over death, and grant us these high stations in thy kingdom, these shining mansions which our Redeemer came before to prepare for us. And now, most gracious Father, what can thy children say! for we are infinitely obliged: the debt we owe, as it exceeded all our songs below, so all, all that we can offer even in thy heavenly temple: but its high arches shall echo, and be the sound transmitted through the immensity of space, while thine assembled sons shout their united hallelujahs.

Christ.

Christ. Children of the Most High, your praise ascends before the throne as acceptable incense.

Grand Chorus. With one accord we own accepting grace, with prostrate reverence and adoration; and bless thee, Great High Priest, through whom our former prayers and present praise ascend accepted before the Lord.

The Christian's Attendance on his own Funeral.

GO, saith the Lord, Christian, my son, revisit earth. Thy friends prepare to lay thy body in the grave, which thou still lovest, and I approve thy love; for shortly will I raise it, glorious and incorruptible. Attend with Abdiel the rite thy friends perform, nor fear an intermission of thy bliss, thy God, thy Heaven, goes with thee.

Christian. Gracious was thy word; wherever thou art it is heaven. Thus prostrate we adore, then haste to obey thy will; and I shall learn new praises from the dust. I bid you short adieu, my heavenly brethren, indulgently enjoined to do what I before desired: my Father knew the secret inclination, and gave, unasked, the wished for order. And now, my lovely Abdiel, we pass successive suns and planets, and reach even in a moment the world from which I came, the house where, while a mortal, I sojourned.

Abdiel. Already thy assembled friends and neighbours surround the breathless clay, to attend it to the dust. We mingle with them unperceived; we see unseen, and speak unheard.

Christian.

Christian. And here are angels too. Say, ye bright sons of God, on what commission are ye sent before us?

Angels. As ministering spirits, brother, to minister to the heirs of salvation, and in particular to thy mourning widow, and to thy children, dignified with special interest in enduring mercy.

Christian. Most welcome tidings. Such were my thoughts while mortal: Blest confirmation! Ten thousand thanks, eternal Father! that thou hast deigned to love those whom I love. And blessed be ye, dear friendly spirits, that attend with such benevolence, your precious charge. These are the objects which demand my first attention here, my dear afflicted family. See the loved partner of my mortal state, attired in widow's weeds, with mournful aspect, bloated eyes, and pressed with grief too great for utterance; a sight able to move even angels. Yes, my loved Abdiel, those grievous sighs, those bursts of tears, touch me even now; nor is thy generous love to mortal saints unmoved on this occasion. My dearest, tenderest mortal friend, that didst so often soothe my earthly cares with words of love and wisdom, member of Christ, and heir of eternal life, couldst thou but see me now, how changed, how dignified, how blest, the sight must surely stop thy sighs and tears,
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and turn thy grief to joy. If wisdom would admit me to unveil my heavenly form, and shine before thee, as my Abdiel sees me, this surely must exchange thy sorrows for triumph, and thy sighs for songs.

Abdiel. The spectacle would dazzle mortal sense, and overwhelm with awe; and well thou knowest that by the heaviness of the countenance the heart is made better. It was with a kind design, not only to thyself, but to thy mourning widow, that our Almighty Father sent me to call thee home. One method is allowed thee to refresh the mournful saint, as the Adversary suggests temptations; and as in former ages of the church, we heavenly spirits oft were sent visible and audible to saints on earth, so now we may suggest important thoughts for warning, quickening, or for consolation, in a painful hour.

Christian. 'Tis done. She takes her Bible, laid near at hand for comfort in her sorrow, and to direct the improvement of affliction.

Widow. Hear, my dear children, a gracious word that God has just now brought to my mind, *Psalms* lxxviii. 5. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation." Your earthly father is dead, but God still lives; and he will be your father and my gra-
cious

cious friend, under the present affliction, if we seek him as such. From heaven he beholds our griefs and our wants; and if we may be so happy as to cleave to him he will be a present help in every time of need. Your dear father, and my dear husband, is gone, but it is to God and glory: Follow him, my dear children, and you shall shortly see him again with unutterable joy.

Christian. Oh, may my God be ever theirs! I will offer a reviving word too to one of them.

Child. A precious word comes into my mind too. If you please to give me the Bible, I believe I can find it. Here it is; *Hosea* xiv. 3. "For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy."

Widow. A precious word, indeed, my dear. Oh, seek continually to make sure of an interest in God as your God, and you will find his word fulfilled to you, my poor dear fatherless child.

Angels. We too, beloved brother, have offered heavenly promises to thy dear mourning widow.

Christian. I thank you, friendly messengers of God, but chiefly him that sent you. Nor will I offer more at present; it is fit she should meditate on these; for souls united to the body receive instruction slowly. So the Great Prophet of the Church, the Eternal Son of God, taught his disciples but as he knew that they could bear.

Widow.

Widow.—God speaks to us, my dear children, in these his gracious words. These scriptures, and some others that have occurred to me before, comfort me, particularly that *Heb. xiii. 5.* “ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” I feel their cheering influence ; the Spirit sets them home, and gives them efficacy to relieve my burdened heart.

Christian. Well hast thou judged, dear saint : The Spirit gives the efficacy ; I only am indulged to offer them, but cannot give them power ; to Him be all the praise. Nor will grace desert thee while on earth ; and at the appointed hour, my amiable saint shall follow me to glory. But thou hearest not, nor is it fit thou shouldst.

Abdiel. See, my dear Christian, other objects round thee.

Christian. A dumb assembly. The silence only broke by now and then a whisper or gentle word, and that impertinent, about my age, the time since this or that event of my mortality, the kind and length of my disease, some general thoughts as to my worldly circumstances, and here and there a vague remark is dropped relating to my character, yet such as turns to no advantage to survivors.

Oh, thoughtless friends and neighbours ! for so I call you still, can't death give eloquence on better themes ? Alas ! it is this that ties their tongues,

nd decency directs restraint from usual vanity of language. But it is a short restraint: that coffin with the human clod within it prevails no more. Vanus begins a theme vain as himself, and meets a ready answer. The folly flies from tongue to tongue. Death is no more remembered; the unwelcome subject is banished, and many shew their satisfaction in their aspect. Are these men mortal too? And do they believe it? O fallen mortals, how sin has depraved your minds! A corpse before your eyes, and trifles on your tongues, tossed to and fro without remorse! Have ye not immortal souls also? And know ye not that there is a righteous judgment drawing near, and an eternal world to which ye hasten? If now you will not think and speak of things so important, when will ye? Perhaps your funerals too are near: Where is your preparation for them? Mine moves you not: Will any thing before your final doom? And if you should awake to thought amidst the jaws of death, how doubtful, how perilous the issue! I pity you, poor blinded mortals, for I was mortal once, and I was fallen too. Eternal thanks to Him that saved me from my state of sin, and raised me to his endless glory.

Abdiel. Yet God has here his witnesses. See indignation mixed with pity, in the aspect of thy
pious

pious friends, that have not seconded the vain discourse. Athanatos struck with a sense of immortality, waits but a moment's pause of vanity to attempt to stem the torrent. It is come: He speaks, and love to souls guides his tongue.

Athanatos. A solemnity of this nature calls us all to consider our latter end, as we are sure that shortly we must die too.

Christian. That word has struck a general silence; not one of those who spoke so freely when vanity was all the theme, have now one word to say to join him; and some remains of shame prevent their cavilling. But he proceeds.

Athanatos. It is therefore highly important that we should apply ourselves to the most diligent preparation for that solemn hour; and a spectacle of mortality before us especially calls us to it at present.

Abdiel. Our brother Pius prepares to second him.

Pius. 'Tis amazing that it is possible in any circumstance of life, to be thoughtless of eternity, and inattentive to the great concern of preparing for it; but if we are thoughtless of it on occasions so much adapted to remind us of it, it is yet more inexcusable.

Eusebius. It is a theme by no means adapted to
make

make us melancholy, and to be shunned on that account. On the contrary, a man that is quickened by the contemplation of death to prepare to meet it, may look for it with pleasure as an object of desire, instead of terror, and as that which will compleat his felicity. And it evidently tends greatly to abate the bitterness of the afflictions of life to be able, upon good grounds, to reflect that eternal deliverance is at hand.

Athanatos. Many that have been much employed in the contemplation of death and eternity, have found by experience the truth of what you say, Sir. I am persuaded that this was the case with our deceased friend. But we have a witness of it, unexceptionable to all that believe the word of God, in that glorious declaration of the Apostle Paul. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Pius. And it is still a more important advantage, attending frequent and serious views of death
and

and the world to come, that where they are thus rendered familiar to the mind, and the soul excited to a diligent preparation for them; when the summons of the Lord of life and death comes, it is prepared to meet it with pleasure. While others shrink back from death, and yet cannot avoid it, they that have attended to it, and prepared for it, are thereby fitted to welcome its approach, and rejoice even in its agonies; and to have comfort in death is inexpressibly desirable.

Eusebius. But as soon as the soul is separated from the body, and entered into the world of spirits, there will then appear a much greater and more important difference than ever before, betwixt a diligent preparation for death, and a thoughtless inattention to it. An appearance before God will certainly awaken the most insensible of mankind: and it will then appear inexpressible folly to have neglected the one thing needful, and to have minded only the concerns of a short abode upon earth, without attending to the greater concerns of an everlasting state.

Christian. Ye witnesses for God, well have ye stemmed the tide of vanity; and though the looks of some betray disgust, yet one I see touched with the conversation. Perhaps the seed of future piety is sown, and you the honoured instruments. But

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now

now my friends prepare to execute the funeral rite: they have brought forth the corpse, and move with slow and solemn procession to its appointed rest. Poor breathless clay! thou shalt return no more to that deserted habitation: That, others must possess; for thee the grave is ready, thy longer dwelling. Helpless clay! that canst not take a step to thine appointed mansion: The icy arms of Death have frozen all thy limbs: Wherein now different from a statue, but more corruptible? But what is this, while I am all activity and life? The garment laid aside, moves no more, but as it is moved; but I that wore it, live and move, and act no less, but with superior freedom.

Abdiel. We visit then the grave.

Christian. It is opened to receive the kindred dust. Devouring grave! here are thy trophies spread; the bones of arms and legs, and skulls of mortals, without sufficient signs to whom they once belonged. These are the relicks of thy prey: but the approaching Judge will call forth all again: thou must refund the tribute thou hast long exacted.

Abdiel. See, my dear Christian, what Death has done on numbers, some of whom thou knewest on earth: For we can see into these dark recesses.

Christian. I see it, blest Abdiel: thee, privileged
from

from death, it less affects: But I behold more touched what ruin Sin, and Death by sin have made. There lies a long inhabitant of these dark tenements; the human form preserved, not yet disturbed to admit another corpse; but it is all dust, and only waits the motion of the spade, to mingle, undistinguished with surrounding dust. Great God, thy sentence is accomplished, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.*

Here lies a later corpse. Worms have found a passage through its covering, and sweetly feed upon it. Oh, flesh! once delicately nourished, where is thy beauty now? Where the once anxious care that guarded thee? Ah, idol! for I know thee who thou wast, how art thou fallen! Wast thou fit object for such attention of an immortal soul, that forgot its God for love of thee? Blest be the grace that taught me better.

Here a poor infant sleeps, brought forth to breathe a few short days, then resign its spirit to its gracious Maker. Blest be the exalted Saviour, who once took infants in his arms, and blest them, with words of lasting comfort to his friends that lay their infant seed in dust.

Here lies another, cut off in early life, while gay ideas flattered a deluded mind, and promised lasting life. Where are the expected pleasures of a

married state, the gains of business, the handsome house, the life of ease, elegance, pleasure, and honour? Ye vain ideas, how ye flatter mortals, and render them regardless of the grave till Death, unflattering, unrelenting, lays them there! Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.

This cell contains another snatched from a scene of crowded business. The soul that dwelt in thee was all activity; but worldly things engrossed its views: Gain was its idol, and gold bewitched its immortal powers. Oh, could not God and heaven find any place in its regards? For I saw it not in heaven. Thy family live enchanted too with that which ruined thee. Here is the poor dust debased to common dust; but oh, the immortal spirit!

Here stands a stately tomb, a whited sepulchre; but all within is putrid filth; a corpse once fed with luxury and excess, for riches furnished all the flesh could wish, and laid the tempting bait to sensuality; so much the more is the corruption. Worms now inhabit where richest meats and generous wines descended. Ah, poverty of earthly riches, that have left the man to whom such numbers bowed, so much corrupted, depressed so low, a fellow commoner with beggars!

Here

Here venerable age had wrinkled all the face,
and withered every limb: The wrinkles yet remain
even in the dust; but they are venerable still.
That hoary head was crowned with majesty and
grace, and heavenly wisdom dwelt upon that
tongue, even when its accents all were weak.

How widely different from the ancient corpse
that lies yonder, where rage, and blasphemies, and
lewdness which the wretch was long incapable of
practising, dwelt on the impious tongue till death
constrained its silence.

Abdiel. How sweet the sleep in which these
friends of Jesus lie, whom once thou sawest on
beds of painful languor.

Christian. I see, my lovely seraph, those whom
disease admitted not to sleep, now sleep in peace,
till the great day of waking triumph.

Here lies Christophila, that dwelt in that poor
cottage, as well thou knowest. Long had she
loved her Saviour; yet fears and jealousies of her-
self, restrained her from those open declarations of
her love that would have recommended her to the
acquaintance of his servants till the disease that led
her to his bosom. A cancered breast called for long
exercise of patience; and then her love to Christ
blazed forth, and made her known. See the poor
corpse, raw, swollen, livid, but all its agonizing

pains are ceased ; and it shall rise in the full bloom of undecaying comeliness.

Here lies Simonitia : Emaciated corpse ! with swift consumption consigned to dust ; released from overwhelming sorrows, begun and hastening to maturity. Triumphant joy in Jesus sat upon her countenance, and sounded from her dying tongue, yet sometimes bursts of tears bewailed the approaching evils of her family. Most seasonable sleep for thee ! Distressed children ! Oh, how should I rejoice to see those poor deserted babes forming for glory, and at length conducted thither. But she is now all resignation to her's and our Father's will ; and pleased with every thing he does, I saw the peaceful spirit exulting near the throne, and vying with the shining choir of worshippers.

Here sleeps Angelicus, a corpse of longer habitation in the grave. The torturing stone that laid thee here, has found a passage to the rotted coffin, but without further pain, or further trial of thy patience ; once approved in agonizing days and torturing nights, but now exchanged for endless joy.

I cease. The corpse that once I animated, with which I walked over these my slumbering friends, itself approaches, and other feet must trample over it, but shall not wake it till the reviving day. The
solemn

solemn knell is ceased, that warns mankind of their mortality. The dust returns to dust, but shall not there be lost. Thy watchful eyes, dear risen Lord, will not neglect the smallest particle where ever hereafter scattered. Thou art the resurrection and the life: and, oh, triumphant thought! this body shall be formed like thine, and I shall gain immense advantage by this its slumber in the dust, when I put it on afresh. Free from corruption and infirmity, this flesh shall rise; this mortal put on immortality; and this corruptible shall put on incorruption; a spiritual body, fit habit for a happy spirit. It is well, oh, heavenly Father! all that thou dost is well; but that is best which thou wilt do hereafter.

Abdiel. We go and worship too with the mourners.

Christian. Most seasonable worship! So death in David's family sent him from prostrate sorrow to the house of God. The hearts of men are tender now if ever; and sovereign love on these occasions sometimes rouses men from the deep lethargy of sin. With joy I join the assembly. Ah, my dear brethren! I worship with you still, though now you see me not, for I am still of the same family; worship is my eternal business and delight, and you shall worship soon with me.

Abdiel. More angels join us, attendants on their precious charge assembled here.

Pause during the Worship.

Christian. Well has the man of God pleaded his master's cause; nor were the assembly unimpressed; perhaps some souls are born to God, and then I shall have double joy in death; but there were devils too as well as angels there, that ran from man to man, whispering some vanity, and drawing off the thoughts of each, with insidious and industrious malice, from hearkening to the word of God, and from regarding his latter end. Unhappy mortals, cannot you perceive the evil tendency of those intruding trifles, and the hostile design of fiends that suggest them? Would you thus easily, thus patiently, suffer yourselves to be interrupted by the impertinence of fellow-mortals, when engaged on the most important business?—When will you be wise?

The Christian attending the Death-Beds of Others.

Abdiel.

ERE we return to heaven, our Father dictates other work : there lies a sinner near at hand struggling with death. We visit the sad scene.

Christian. With joy I hearken to my Father's dictates, and here shall learn distinguished strains of praise.

Abdiel. We reach the mournful place ; see what attendants compass the dying wretch.

Christian. Tremendous scene ! How different my attendants, when I lay expiring ! Oh, boundless grace of God to me !

Devils. Ye hated spirits of light, what is your business here ? This man is our's : Even on the brink of death his heart remains hard and impenitent. What have you to do with him, or we with you ?

Abdiel. We come not to oppose you, but as spectators of this awful scene.

Devils. Your presence gives us pain : we hate the sight of glory which we cannot enjoy.

Abdiel. You must endure the pain our presence

gives; we come by heavenly order, and wait against your will the sad catastrophe.

Devils. See then our triumph. The Gospel here had no effect, and private admonitions were in vain; sometimes he would not bear reproof, but raged against the reprover; and when he did not this, yet he regarded not, but still continued the same; once he was startled, and we feared to lose our prey; but we prevailed to blind his eyes, to harden him again; and from that time he has been tenfold more the child of hell than before. See Pius comes to make a last attempt to rescue him, but it is too late; the wretch is dying now, and every former scheme devised to strip us of our power in him was vain. See the sad aspect of your pious friend, to find his disappointment: Ah, Pius, thou art come on a fool's errand, to save a dying sinner from hell.

Abdiel. 'Tis not so to himself; the Lord will not forget this, and his past attempts, nor fail to crown his servant's zeal; and yet he will not leave this room without some seasonable warning to the company. Here he begins.

Pius. How awful is this scene, through which we also must pass, in a few days or years more. Oh, let us remember every day, every hour of life, the infinite importance of being found in Christ

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at death. Let us seek it my friends from henceforth as those that have seen a fellow-creature dying. Let us suppose ourselves in his place now, and imagine that shortening breath, those deep-fetched sobs our own ; and let us then solemnly ask ourselves, should I be safe if it was so ? Is death disarmed of its sting for me ? And could I appear with comfort before that awful tribunal to which I should then be just going ? My friends, I would solemnly ask myself these questions, and I intreat each of you to do the same ; and if you cannot give a clear and satisfactory answer, allow yourselves, I beseech you, no rest till you can.

Devils. None answers him ; he goes dejected hence, and we remain triumphant.

Abdiel. Ah, execrable triumph ! Yet know that shortly the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea ; and we shall sing, “ Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.” Poor triumph too for spirits reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day, and by these triumphs pulling down the sorer vengeance on yourselves ! Oh, how has sin infatuated angels !

Devils. Confounding truths.

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Abdiel.

Abdiel. See, my dear Christian, a dreadful scene just opening : he fetches his last sobs.

Christian. I wait the moment with the utmost awe. 'Tis come.

Departed Sinner. Oh, oh, oh, hell and confusion ! What are you, ye hideous monsters ?

Devils. See, thou thyself art such a monster too.

Sinner. Oh, dreadful change ! Am I the same being, or turned into another ? Why do you seize me ? Release me, horrid monsters : I'll animate this clay afresh.

Devils. Thou canst not, fool ; the avenues of life are stopped ; and thou art ours, nor canst escape.

Sinner. Amazing insolence ! I'll not be treated thus : I am no companion for such forms as you : I have been accustomed to far better usage.

Devils. Fool, dost thou think to hector us ? Thou shalt be treated thus and worse : We are thy companions to eternity ; and which is more, thy lords, thy tyrants, thy tormentors.

Sinner. And who are ye, superlatively hateful ? Or, what is your claim on me ?

Devils. We are devils come from hell, to drag thee first to God's tribunal, and from thence to infernal flames, and dost thou ask our claim on thee ?

thee ? Thou art an enemy to God, and that's our claim.

Sinner. You lie, ye fiends, I am not an enemy to God ; what have I done against him ?

Devils. Thou hatedst saints and holiness, and madest them objects of thy mockery.

Sinner. Yes, a few whining hypocrites, and all their foolish cant ; sometimes they would disturb me with reproofs, and always by their practice condemned me.

Devils. Those were the friends of God.

Sinner. It cannot be, ye fiends ; but where is your further proof ?

Devils. Thou didst indulge thy lusts.

Sinner. Ye tempted me.

Devils. We did, indeed ; and thou wast fool enough to hearken to us ; go urge that foolish plea before thy Judge, but know we did not force thee.

Sinner. Alas, that plea will not avail me.

Devils. Nor any other thou canst make.

Sinner. But, surely, you should pity me, who own you tempted me to sin.

Devils. Pity in devils ! Thou fool, if possible, yet greater than when a mortal, that is our joy, our triumph, to tempt men first, and then torment them in the depths of hell for ever.

Sinner.

Sinner. For ever, do you say, and will you torment me too for ever?

Devils. Yes, that we will, for ever.

Sinner. Monsters, tygers, furies, devils as ye are! oh, those dreadful words for ever.

Devils. Yes, yes, for ever; dwell on those words; let all their horror seize thee, and the dread reflection torture thee to the utmost; thy torments must endure for ever; but we will trifle here no longer; come on, approach thy Judge; we are impatient till we have thee, in devouring flames below.

Sinner. Oh, yet delay: I dare not stand before my Judge.

Devils. Thou must appear before him, and we will not delay a moment.

Sinner. Oh, oh, oh, ye monsters, let me alone, leave me to wander endlessly: I cry in vain: These fiends are void of pity, and I am helpless, friendless. Oh, horror inexpressible! My Judge! what shall I say before him? There is nothing I can plead: I am damned, and lost for ever.

Christian. His shrieks yet reach us. Ah, miserable creature! if thou hadst known in that thy day now past the things that belonged to thy peace, but they were hidden from thine eyes, and now are so for ever. What thanks can I repay before
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the almighty Throne, that this tremendous case was not mine? See the mourning relatives. Oh, if ye knew the case of that poor wretch departed, what would your sorrows be? Perhaps there is one, or more, to whom eternal things put on awful aspect, that have their fears concerning him; but they neither saw nor heard what I have done; how would their hearts ache with supportless anguish if they had! But hear, my Abdiel, how his friends commend him whom the Lord condemns, and harden each his own and one another's hearts, with flattering hopes concerning the deceased; they reckon up all that looked like good, and even break through all the sacred bounds of truth; one says he was a very honest man, and paid all their own, and therefore must be happy. Another says he kept to his profession; another, he did nobody any hurt, and if he is not happy, what will become of thousands? Another forms the same conclusion on yet weaker ground; he had his great afflictions here, and therefore we may hope that God has made them up to him in another world; another adds a kindred confirmation, that he died like a lamb. These the wise premises, and yet on these the infatuated creatures build the false conclusion, that he is gone to heaven, whom we have seen dragged hence by hellish fiends. Oh, that

mankind

mankind would believe the Saviour's words, "That except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Abdiel. It is, indeed, grievous infatuation; but I have seen it often, and so hast thou sometimes.

Christian. I have, my Abdiel, in my mortal state, and lamented it.

Abdiel. I know thou hast; but here is a different scene at hand, adapted also to excite thy gratitude. Our brother, Timidus, after long fears and unbelief, that kept him not from following Christ, but from that comfort in him which he might have taken, is now about to be released from fear and doubt for ever; but labouring under them yet, even to his latest hours. We reach the happy, though yet mournful scene.

Attending Angels. Welcome, ye heavenly brethren, ye come to see a doubting Christian die.

Christian. It is our design, ye amiable spirits; and I, that left the world in triumph, am come to learn new praise on that account.

Attending Angels. Hear then his fears, and what his pious friends reply.

Timidus. I am going; but, oh, I know not whither.

Evangelist. It is, I am persuaded, my dear brother, to the glorious assembly above. I dare not
flatter

flatter you, but speak what I do not doubt but God will soon confirm; nor is it without ground I speak; I have known your conversation, and heard and seen those things in you, which I cannot but think, according to the tenor of the word of God, to be marks of saving grace. If I was less acquainted with you, I might have more doubt, and must speak with more uncertainty, but cannot see room for any in your case.

Timidus. I fear my experiences were all delusions.

Evangelist. Enter, Sir, if you please, as far as your strength will admit, into some particulars.

Timidus. I fear that my repentance was not sincere, because my heart was often hard and unmoved, even when I was convinced that I had sinned.

Evangelist. Yet did you not humble yourself, and repent before God; if not upon the first conviction of your sin, yet afterward, when you came to reflect upon it, and when your heart was brought by divine grace to a better and softer disposition?

Timidus. I did, Sir, and on those occasions endeavoured to recollect all my past sins, and humble myself particularly for them; but I fear my repentance was not deep enough, because not equal to that of many others.

Evangelist.

Evangelist. Did it not engage you to maintain a continued warfare against all sin for the future?

Timidus. It did, Sir, though with much imperfection; but, surely, if my repentance had been right, I could not have been so easily drawn into sin again.

Evangelist. I have observed that the doubts of many Christians amount to no more than this; they are not perfect, and therefore they are afraid they are not sincere; but you know, Sir, that we are not to expect an entire freedom from sin in the present state.

Timidus. I know it, Sir; but, surely, I should have been more holy, and more watchful, if I had truly repented.

Evangelist. But you have had some comfortable seasons, in which God has sealed to you the pardon of your sins.

Timidus. Indeed I hoped so, but am afraid I was mistaken.

Evangelist. But did not the hope and comfort that you then had make you more watchful?

Timidus. I have sometimes hoped that it did; but, surely, if it had been so, I should have been better guarded against sin, and gained greater victories over it; but my strength fails.

Evangelist.

Evangelist. Then hear me a few words. The sincerity of repentance is not so much to be judged of by the degree of inward anguish that the penitent endures, as by the effect it produces, continued watching and praying against sin, and those comforts that make the soul more watchful, and that for continuance and with respect to inward as to outward sins, are plainly from God; for every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure.

Timidus. Oh, if I should be mistaken!

Evangelist. Christ will not suffer those to be mistaken who dread and guard against a mistake.

Friend. He answers not, and death appears approaching. Will you please, Sir, to pray with him?

Evangelist. With the greatest readiness, if it will not be burdensome to him.

(Here one asks him, who makes a sign that it will not, he being still supposed sensible, and Evangelist prays.)

Evangelist. I see he is just expiring—he is gone.

Departed Spirit. The mighty change is passed; but who are these bright forms? Say, heavenly spirits, for such your form bespeaks you, is it peace? Come ye as awful messengers of wrath? Or may I hope your errand gracious?

Angels.

Angels. Dismiss thy fears for ever, dear timorous brother: Thy heavenly Father sent us to convey thee to his gracious presence, to dwell in endless light, and never ceasing joy; and he will call thee by a new name, expressive of thy victory and glory.

Departed Spirit. Oh, is it possible! Were then my torturing fears ungrounded? Is this delusion too? No, it is waking bliss, surprizing rapture! Just now I feared lest a few moments more should plunge me into hell. Those moments past have brought me these delightful tidings. Oh, gracious Father, compassionate Redeemer, and ye blessed spirits that stoop to call me brother! I am all astonishment. The words even of spirits fail to tell my vast unutterable joy.

Christian. Welcome, triumphant spirit, to our glorious state. I am a human spirit too, a child of God, a servant of Emmanuel, whom his grace has raised from earth to Heaven. Unimagined bliss awaits thee, a God more glorious far, a Saviour bright with greater grace, and an assembly more illustrious than thou hast ever thought.

Departed Spirit. What joy, what eager expectation, lovely spirit, thy words excite! What must I do, or whither must I go, to see this glorious God, this gracious Saviour, and this bright assembly?

Angels.

Angels. We come as thy convoy. Follow us.

Abdiel. We also, my dear Christian, join this shining train, and ascend to God.

Departed Spirit. Farewel, thou clay; the joy of my salvation leaves me no room for further thought of thee, till Christ shall bid thee rise. Oh, ye kind spirits, how joyful is this journey! how blest this haste through suns and planets and flow moving comets! Ye wonders, ye detain me not, for I go to him that made you. There is the shining throne, and here the bright Assembly, and am blest for ever!

The Christian's Adoration on his Return from Earth.

ETERNAL Father, prostrate at thy throne, I bless that grace that called me into being, and formed that flesh, now laid in the dust, to be my temporary habitation, and only temporary till thy power refines it. Ten thousand hallelujahs to thy sovereign grace, that taught me, while I sojourned there, to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts ; that rescued me at first, and afterwards preserved me from the mean slavery of yielding it vile service to the debasement of my reason and immortal nature, and to eternal ruin. I triumph now in freedom from that body of death : My fetters broke, now in perfect liberty to serve thee, for that is my dearest choice, and mine eternal dignity.

Yet thine eyes penetrate the cells of death, and watch that dust deposited there. Oh, how the Eternal stoops to look into the grave, and guard the mouldering dust ! Sin laid it there ; yet eyes of spotless purity observe it with paternal grace ; and when the hour fixed in thy secret councils comes,

comes, thou wilt collect its particles, if scattered from the place where now it is laid, and form it a fair structure, free from weakness, from fatigue, from pain, from corruption, and from death; a spiritual body, bright as a star in this grand constellation of thy sons: And oh, unmeasurable grace! vile as it is, then thou wilt fashion it like the glorious body of thy Son, the shining pattern visible in heaven, to give us all the joy of rapturous expectation: He, dearest Lord, the illustrious head, and we the kindred members. Then shall thy word take place, that this corruptible must put on incorruption, this mortal put on immortality. That tongue, now silent, shall awake to nobler songs than e'er it sung in the dear tabernacles of thy grace below, and the high arches of thy temple echo loud with praise. Death the last enemy destroyed, thy sons shall reign in life through Jesus Christ our Lord. We wait the day, pleased till thy wisdom bid it rise, and then more highly pleased. Then those mouldering bodies I have seen, in which thy saints performed their pilgrimage, shall join the triumph, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and as an army marshalled with spreading banners, though then no more for war; our warfare is accomplished, and everlasting triumph is before us. How large, how fair thy family,
when

dressed in those bright garments thou wilt prepare!
 What honour wilt thou put on bodies once so
 vile! And what high anthems shall proclaim thy
 praise!

But thou hast shewn thy servant other cause for
 admiring gratitude. I saw the king of terrors in
 his black array, armed with his dreadful sting as
 the executioner of divine wrath. How fierce his
 aspect! How dreadful his commission! How for-
 midable his attendants! But oh, unmeasurable
 grace! He came not such to me: I saw no terror
 in his face; I felt no sting he had: For such was
 thy indulgent order, that he should leave all his
 terrors behind, and come, a peaceful messenger to
 me, with angels his attendants. Dear blest Em-
 manuel, thy word was well fulfilled, "He that be-
 lieveth on me shall never die." From me Satan
 fled baffled, and shafts of flaming vengeance chased
 him. Oh, how different from that wretch I saw
 his prey! He, miserable creature, dragged to thy
 tribunal: I rose exulting to thy throne. He, driven
 to eternal darkness, and I a child, an everlasting
 heir of light; loud hallelujahs my employ, and
 endless rapturous joy and praise.

Nor came thy messenger Death to me as I have
 seen him come to this thy child, with me arrived
 at these bright realms. His aspect more serene; he

wore not even one frowning feature: All was peace, all triumph, which the foe in vain attempted to disturb. Thy spirit witnessed with my spirit, that I, unworthy as I am, was yet a child of God. Praise, rapturous and eternal praise, for his blest witness, that illumined my dark hours on earth, and struck the clearest light upon my darkest hour of all, when the heart and flesh were failing! Such was thy gracious pleasure, that a worm, a sinner should thus taste the heavenly fruit before he reached the tree of life. But here it yields its fruits profusely: I feast, but cannot be cloyed. Strong, yet eternal is its guest! Blessed, blessed, blessed, ten thousand thousand thousand times be blessed, thy sovereign, boundless love!

*The Christian forming an Acquaintance with
the Inhabitants of Heaven.*

“**M**Y Abdiel,” saith the Lord, “lead these my sons through all the shining ranks, and let them know their brethren.”

Christian. Thanks, gracious Father, for the indulgent order.

Abdiel. See, my dear brethren, first and near the throne, those venerable spirits that look with such peculiar delight on the redeemed from earth ! These are ancient parents of your race.

Christian. I must salute them. Primæval parents ! venerable ancestors ! thousands of years have not divided your descendants from you. How I rejoice to see you in this fairer paradise, where the sword flames no more, and cherubic legions conduct us to the tree of life !

Adam. Ah ! my dear offspring, how our hearts exult to see you here with all these myriads, on whom we let in sin and death ! Every revolving day on earth accumulates our joy to see new sons of ours, once ruined, rescued and saved, and brought

brought to endless life. You owed your misery first to us, but your recovery to the second Adam. O thou that stoopedst from the heavenly state to be the woman's seed ; I bless thee now anew, as on innumerable occasions past, that thou repaidst the ruin I had caused, and from the wide destruction I introduced, had ransomed these my offspring.

Christian. You shall not bless Emmanuel alone. I thank thee also, dear incarnate Lord, with gratitude too great for utterance, that when I had destroyed myself, in thee was my help found. And ye, dear ancient ancestors, I shall know you yet further ; but now I make a transient visit, as yet a stranger in these shining realms, and forming my acquaintance with the hosts of light. I have some pious, amiable friends on earth, imperfect yet ; but here I meet innumerable myriads, more amiable far, and free from every imperfection.

Abdiel. I need not tell thee who this bright adorer is ; intent for ever on the Deity, and encircled with his brightest beams.

Christian. No, my dear Abdiel : the body he still wears acquaints me with his name. Illustrious Enoch ! Still thou walkest with God. Bright pattern of terrestrial saints ! Thy ardour kindled mine ; and I aspired, inflamed by thy example, to

walk with God as well as thyself. But oh ! how far was I inferior ? Here will I vie with thee anew.

Enoch. Nobly resolved, dear stranger spirit ! And there's enough in God to employ thee to eternity, and to fill thee with unmeasurable bliss. I claim thee as one of my associates in my highest worship, and most blessed enjoyments, when the peculiar rites of stranger spirits are accomplished.

Christian. Nor will I fail to emulate thy highest ardors.

Abdiel. See the holy fervor of Noah ; Who obtained the like illustrious character, and mingles, with transports of devotion, such high complacency, to see such multitudes arrived, and yet arriving from earth.

Christian. Father of the new world, and follower of the illustrious Enoch, well has Almighty Grace accomplished thy prediction in these thy innumerable sons of Japhet's race, as well as Shem's ; and I, amidst these glorious myriads, appear a witness of it.

Noah. Well hast thou judged, dear offspring : and I rejoice to see thee added to this glorious family. But oh, my son ! was it not grace beyond expression, that gave me such an intimation, thus gloriously

gloriously answered, just after my departure from the Lord?

Christian. Undoubtedly it was, thou honoured ancestor. But what am I and multitudes amidst these numerous hosts, but monuments of the most stupendous grace, that pardoned sins equal to thine, more enormous, and often repeated? Thy sin, perhaps, proceeded from inexperience and ignorance, in part the effect of wine, after the long disuse of it ; ours were wilful.

Noah. Mine had peculiar aggravations. It was a very dangerous precedent to those that should descend from me; and it was committed after that peculiar grace that saved me and my family when the world was drowned.

Christian. That must be owned a circumstance which magnifies our Father's pardoning grace. But shall I ask, illustrious progenitor, what were thy thoughts in that amazing situation; when the falling cataracts and spouting fountains set thy ark afloat; and one unbounded sea kept thee a year within that abode, with the remains of the creation committed to thy care?

Noah. The thoughts of an imperfect saint.
Great was the trial of my faith, but greater were its
supports. I had our general Father's word to rest
upon, confirmed by the distinction made in my
I 3 behalf,

behalf, while all mankind lay drowned besides, to the ease of my mighty cares, and the stay of my faith when staggering.

Christian. Great was thy trial; and great was thy faith that bore thee through it.

Noah. Rather, my dear son, great was the grace that saved me, and strengthened me for that amazing trial.

Christian. That is our universal song; Grace, sovereign grace; and this high temple stands for ever dedicated to its praise. Perpetuate the echo of our songs, ye lofty domes of heaven, and sound our everlasting shout, grace, grace immense! eternal grace!

Abdiel. These are the sons of Noah whom thou mentionedst. This is Shem—Japhet this.

Christian. O ye fair spirits of glory! well is heaven replenished with your offspring. What joy to you, to see so many of your sons brought to glory! Thine are numerous, happy Shem; but gathered chiefly in ages past; for blindness is now come on many of those that yet inhabit the earth, hereafter to be healed; and a new crowd of thy descendants yet to enter heaven. But thy posterity, O father Japhet! perhaps in greater numbers, lay hold of eternal life.

Japhet. God has, indeed, enlarged me in this
my

my numerous, glorious family. Ten thousand welcomes, my dear son, to thee and all my numerous sons arrived in these bright regions: And be ten thousand times ten thousand hallelujahs sung round the throne for this amazing grace to me and my descendants.

Christian. Again hallelujah ! Ye sons of Japhet, join the praise.

Grand Chorus of Japhet's Race.

Hallelujah ! hallelujah to the Eternal Father ! that visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. Hallelujah to our great Emmanuel, who, though sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, has yet brought other sheep to this glorious fold ! And hallelujah to the Holy Ghost, who put no difference between Jews and us in his gracious approbation, but purified our hearts by faith !

Abdiel. See, my dear Christian, the father of the faithful !

Christian. Illustrious Abraham, great is the effect of thy promise, that if thou couldest number the stars, so should thy seed be : we Gentiles witness it.

Abraham. Thus, my dear son, the Lord outdoes his promises, and gives me for my seed more

than descended from me ; yet not less dear to me than those that did.

Christian. I am come into thy family by another door than that of natural descent, the door of faith which yet stands open for the admission of other sons. And, oh ! my boundless obligations, that by that door I found admittance here, and am not crying from the depths of Hell, like one of thy unhappy descendents, for some Lazarus to be sent from thy bosom to dip his finger in water, and with the insensible drop, afford a moment's mercy to a poor burning tongue !

Abraham. Thou sayest it well, as learnt from the records of eternal truth ; but thou wilt sing heavenly mercy in strains of more exalted gratitude, when thou hast taken a nearer view of Hell. See now, far off in darkness, where the pit gapes ! and at our Father's pleasure, we hear from thence the agonizing cries of sinners ; and are thereby confirmed in blessedness. Thence the rich sinner cried, and I replied as Christ has taught thee.

Christian. I see only the door of the dungeon. While I look it flashes.

Abraham. An heavenly order bids it flash just at this instant, for thy instruction, and that of other stranger-spirits here.

Christian. Oh ! How it groans and shrieks from
thousand

thousand tongues in agonies ! Now should I tremble, were I not in Heaven ; and (were here not) my God, my Saviour, and my friends.

O ! Thou enthroned on high, I wonder ; I am lost in astonishment, and shall be so to all eternity ; that I, rebellious as I was, groan not among them : but sing amidst that blessed choir ! Thy blood, immortal Lamb, redeemed me from the pit : and thy victorious power, spirit of grace, subdued the hardened folly that hurried me to rush into it. I am a brand plucked from the burning. I love the Lord that plucked me thence : let tongues innumerable repeat the praise, I love the Lord that plucked me thence.

Abraham. The lightnings cease ; the groaning thunder dies ; the immediate end is answered. The heavenly temple, through its most distant parts, rings with grateful praise to our redeeming God.

Christian. O Father, more I would have said to thee, but I am full of awe. What I have seen and heard, engrosses every thought ; and Abdiel beckons forward. I shall return and learn of thee thy knowledge and thy praise in heaven, as once I learnt thy faith on earth.

Abdiel. S Sarah here : there Isaac ; here wrestling Jacob ; and there is Joseph.

Christian. O ye bright spirits, well I know you by the sacred records, and now begin to know you personally; nor shall the new acquaintance die. O Isaac (the second of the three first post-diluvian Worthies) surely thy faith and obedience were scarcely inferior to thy father Abraham's, who, in youthful strength, when thou foundest thou wert to be led for sacrifice, didst suffer the good old man to bind thee, lay thee upon the altar, and even proceed to stretch forth his hand to take the fatal knife to slay thee. Didst thou not know also, that thou wert the son in whom his seed should be called? And how could it be, hadst thou been slain?

Isaac. I knew it well, fair stranger-spirit; but I knew too my dear father's intercourse with God: I knew his love, and that he never would have taken that step with his beloved, the son of his old age, and the son of the promise, without a divine command; and I had learnt from him to bow to this authority without reserve; and the same faith which supported *him*, bore *me* up also, "accounting that God was able to raise me from the dead;" though, sometimes, neither of us saw any way in which that could be fulfilled.

Christian. Therein thou wert a bright type of the Son of God, who gave himself "a sacrifice
and

and offering of a sweet-smelling savour," to God for us. But was it not another great trial of thy faith, after such submission, to be blind so many years in the close of thy life?

Isaac. Undoubtedly it was ; but the God of my father Abraham graciously let me know, that he was my God too ; and would add the name of my son Jacob to the former happy triumvirate. There he worships near me.

Christian. Well didst thou wrestle, Israel, not for *thyself* alone, but as a father to me and ten thousands more.

Jacob. The spirit helped thy infirmities.

Christian. It did : therefore be its praises high and eternal. It helped *thine* too, and made thy importunity the means of quickening innumerable saints. Thy wondrous story taught us the depths of providence, and we have learnt with thee, to wait for God's salvation, which we now enjoy.

Jacob. This great salvation, in the fruition of which we now mutually delight, unrolls the mighty volumes of our Father's providence, as thou wilt shortly know to thine unutterable joy : for stranger spirits, amidst their other entertainments, learn that glorious history.

Christian. So have I hoped and so expected ; and as thou learnedst upon earth how greatly thou

wert mistaken in that word, "all these things are against me," so I shall undoubtedly see wisdom and love in dispensations, clouded most to me and to the innumerable inhabitants of heaven.

Abdiel. See, next is Moses.

Christian. Illustrious Moses, wise was thy estimation, when thou thoughtedst even the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: and noble was the view of him that is invisible to mortals, when it engaged thee greatly to endure!

Moses. Blessed follower of the Lamb, wert not thou also governed by such a view, and such an estimation?

Christian. I learnt by thy example, and followed thee, but with unequal (yet thanks to boundless grace) not with unprofitable steps. I faintly emulated thy meekness; yet, O great example, there was one more meek than thee, and a more spotless pattern, Jesus, the Son of God.

Moses. So differed in the world from whence we came, the glimmer of the smallest star from the full blaze of the meridian sun. It was an honor inexpressible to be a type of *him*, and he himself who made me so, taught me my meekness.

Christian. Glorious was thy ambition, and great
thy

thy prayer, " I beseech thee, shew me thy glory : " yet say, servant of God, hadst thou not seen in the mount ?

Moses. Glory indeed I saw, but wrapt in darkness, and longed for a more distinct, a clearer view.

Christian. Say yet, was not that view a-kin to this, which now illumines Heaven ?

Moses. It was a-kin, but shrouded, and at distance seen ; not to overwhelm a mortal view ; yet it produced, as well thou knowest, a like effect, I bowed and worshipped, as we now bow and prostrate ourselves. O * Emanuel, great was the view thou gavest thy servant of thy glory *then*, but thou didst give a nobler answer to my prayer, and here hast shown me glory dazzling even to immortal eyes.

Christian. And I, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (yet a child to be born) through thy invaluable blood, partake of this blissful sight, exceeding that with which thou deignest

* I think myself authorized to consider this appearance of God, on Mount Sinai, as an appearance of *Christ* : because " no man hath seen God at any time ; " the " only-begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him ; " and often appeared to the ancient saints, bearing the incommunicable name of JEHOVAH.

then

then to favor this thy servant: and in thy temple every one speaks of thy glory.

Abdiel. See Joshua next.

Christian. O, Joshua, faithful was that promise, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;” and not to thee alone the Captain of Salvation spoke: he spoke to me, and to ten thousands of his servants in that gracious word; and faithful was that word to all.

Joshua. Such, blessed Spirit, was that gracious promise: a lamp lighted for me, but it grew into a sun, which spread its glorious influences through the world, and shines to remotest ages.

Christian. To thee it was peculiar honor to bear the Saviour’s name.

Joshua. But oh! How wide the difference! I led his Israel to possess the land of Canaan, *he* leads these multitudes, of all kindreds, and tongues, and people and nations, to this more glorious, promised land: he led me hither.

Christian. Uninterrupted harmony reigns through the courts of heaven, in these songs that saints, of ancient and modern days, unite to sing. To “HIM that has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood;” and hath made us kings and priests unto “God, and his Father, be glory, honor and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

Hear

Hear the general, grateful shout; and we will join with equal zeal unto *him* that loved *us*, &c.

Abdiel. Here Eli worships near the ark of God's testament, in this his opened temple.

Christian. Once, holy worshipper, thy heart trembled for the ark of God, as mine, and multitudes besides on earth, have done: but now no more.

Eli. No more indeed, blessed stranger; such was the effect of love to God: but *mine* how faint, when I more honoured my abandoned sons than him!

Christian. The prevailing crime of mortals, which still spreads its baneful influence even amidst Christian families, unwarned by thine example.

Eli. And it tarnishes parent's glory, not on earth alone, but even *here*, where I had shone with greater splendor, had not that sin my lustre stained; and my sons, perhaps, now lost. But, oh! boundless grace, that amidst deserved displeasure, saved me!

Christian. Thy acknowledgements, O holy priest, is mine, and that of all this royal priesthood now consecrated to our God.

Samuel and David. Eli's guilt in part was our's: but we ourselves, O depths of grace unmeasurable! exult before the Lord.

Christian.

Christian. O Samuel—for thy words tell me who thou art—thy early piety yet teaches and inspires the children of the saints with the blest desired to converse with their Maker; while thy ripened zeal becomes a pattern to Christian ministers in a degenerate age. And thou, sweet Psalmist, I know thy harp: I learnt some of its melodious strains while yet a pilgrim; and rejoiced to think, that distant ages scarcely divided my humble praise from thy exalted notes. Here will I join thee, and sing with thee for ever. On earth I begun thy penitential songs, as best befitted me. Here, the high praise of God shall fill our mouths, and ring through all the spacious temple.

David. Nobly resolved! But thou knowest, bright spirit, who it was that tuned my harp, and taught it all its sacred music.

Christian. I know it well, thou leader of the sacred song; and for whose sake thy harp was tuned to melody, superior to every thing but that of heavenly harps. I bless the gracious agent, the source of sacred symphony in the earthly tabernacle, and this his heavenly temple; and thee, the instrument he honoured to fit me, with innumerable myriads more, for the high services of heaven.*

Thy

* Here I thought of subjoining, that David yet sung his song, "not unto us, O Lord, but unto thee give glory."

But

Thy consecrated song panted for God ; fired with the sacred sentiment I panted for him also ; so taught by his inspiring grace. My heart and flesh cried out for God with thee ; and often said to him with thy evangelic interpreter, Watts.

“ And I am thine by sacred ties,

“ Thy Son, thy servant bought with blood.”* I triumph in the thought, that I shall praise him, while I had my being, “ and immortality endured.”† Sweet was thy song when our Emmanuel was the theme : his sufferings, his glory, and the eternal covenant sealed with his blood—Psalm 89. From thee I learnt to love the word of God, and call it “ sweeter than the honey-comb.” Of Heaven also thou sungest. I learnt, and now with thee am “ satisfied with God’s likeness.”

David. What delightful things thou sayest, O blessed stranger spirit ! Oh ! how am I indebted to the grace that cheered me while I sung ; and honoured me to help thy progress hither !

Abiel. Here Solomon adores, of whose repentance some amongst mankind have almost doubted.

But it appears to me, on further consideration, a Prayer importing, “ Do not show us the mercy we need to honour us, but to honour thine own name : this is confirmed by the following verse. See Psalm cxv. 2.

* See Watts’s.

† Ibid. Psalm cxlvi. Pec. Metre. Verses 1 and 6th.

Christian.

Christian. The silence of the Scriptures, well thou knowest, begot that doubt.

Abdiel. To fill mankind with everlasting dread of sin, our Father's wisdom chose that silence. But couldest thou not perceive marks of his repentance, in these solemn warnings against the lusts of the flesh, with which the introduction to his proverbs abounds?

Christian. I saw them there, Abdiel: and as I thought, more clearly and strongly there than in his preacher; where others thought they discovered them. I must accost the royal penitent.—
“Wise King of Israel, here is the wisdom of the perfect; these its native realms; and thine is here returned to its blessed source, in that absorbed and heightened—like rolling streams upon earth, which slowly mount above obstructing domes, or creep round them; but when with the ocean joined, tows into mountainous waves.

Solomon. So low was mine on earth, O stranger faint, compared with that which blesses Heaven; though, in comparison with other mortals, like swelling rivers to smaller brooks. But, ah! thou knowest how all my wisdom failed me, and left a lasting proof to man, how much the wisest need incessant guidance from above.

Christian. Heaven the pious sentiment inspires
to

to the saints below; and thou, the secretary of Heaven, gavest the important caution, "in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own conceit: fear the Lord, and depart from evil." (Proverbs iii. 6, 7.) "Lean not to thine own understanding."

Solomon. I learnt the document by sad experience. To mine I trusted, and it awfully failed me.

Christian. Yet* the beloved of God could not be lost; and his essential wisdom reclaimed its son, when strayed into the maze of folly.

Solomon. Else I had wandered to destruction. But be our God's paternal grace and wisdom ever praised, that rescued me from folly's paths, and brought me hither!

Christian. That theme well suits innumerable tongues. *We* join the praise, and shout loud hallelujahs to paternal care.

Abdiel. Here Ase worships.

Ase. Blessed spirits, I attend to your converse with my glorified ancestor: myself a kindred monument of grace eternal. Like *his*, my last works equalled not my first. When God had granted great deliverance, which produced some blessed

* Alluding to Solomon's name, *Jedidia*, because the Lord loved him. See 2 Samuel, xii. 25.

effects for the time then present, yet afterwards I trusted not in God but man ; and oh, strange rebellion ! I withstood the monitor my gracious Father sent, and repaid his faithful zeal and love with the most unworthy bonds.

Christian. From thee indeed, as well as from thy wiser progenitor and many others, succeeding candidates for heaven, have learnt their great need of caution to their latest hours ; learnt to distrust themselves continually, and to live through all the scenes of life, and after great experiences, still depending on almighty grace. But now, O royal saint, thou and the faithful prophet are united in everlasting harmony.

Asa. Yes, blessed stranger ; now, the clouds of peevishness and folly are blown away, I love him, and often have thanked him *here* for what below I so sinfully resented. But he stands among the prophets, nor wears he the meanest crown though celebrated less.

Christian. O Hanani, known only by thy faithfulness, that glory of thy prophetic office, and by thy sufferings for it. Thy Lord forgot not thy courageous service, nor overlooked thy bonds. See 2 Chron. xvi. 7—11.

Hanani. No, blest stranger ; this everlasting liberty, and this unfading Crown, repays with infinite

finite advantage the bonds I wore ; heightened by that eternal love which now subsists between me and that dear prince who bound me. And here are thousands of monuments besides of our indulgent Father's bounty to his faithful servants.

Christian. Eternal is the truth or profession : a faithful servant never serves an unfaithful God.

Abdiel. Knowest thou not this spirit, that bears an aspect of peculiar mildness ?

Jehosophat. Of *mildness* dost thou say, my Abdiel ? To *that* does heavenly benevolence impute my want of zeal, my union with the enemies of God, my shameful cowardice, and my infatuation when with Ahab leagued ? Behold that prophet, how he warned my father Aza ! I saw his faithfulness, and yet unprofited by the illustrious pattern ; though a king, I failed in fidelity and courage to the unhappy prince with whom I joined. I offered only one cold word for this illustrious prophet near me ; I saw him dragged to prison, nor interposed on his behalf ; and when my life was given me for a prey, exposed by Ahab's treacherous device, to escape the threatened vengeance, I yet foolishly joined his son.

Christian. Thus through these shining realms humility prevails ; and all the ransomed from the earth remember yet their faults, though not with
pain,

pain, yet with a sense of their demerit, which aggrandizes pardoning grace.

Jehosophat. See, blessed stranger, the injured prophet. Though I neglected him, a faithful God remembered him.

Christian. Injuries to the prophets, humble Prince, are not unusual.

Jehosophat. Injuries from the Saints are shameful. But, be the Lord adored, that raised his injured servant to dignity, and me—O miracle of grace!—that looked with faint impressions on his sufferings, to everlasting union with him here.

Micaiah. Thy injury to me, O King, was barely negative.

Jehosophat. Arise, dear Micaiah, thou knowest it was no trial for one in my exalted station; but to neglect a Prophet, when Ahab *needed* me, and must have granted what I boldly asked; and when a gracious God had heard my prayer, and afforded me such numerous deliverances!—But God forgave me—and be his boundless Grace adored with everlasting rapture.

Christian. Mine, thine, O Prince, and all the songs of Heaven concur in this delightful theme. With this we fill eternity; nor shall our worship languish on a theme not copious alone, but infinite. But, blessed Micaiah, what was thy intent when first thou saidst to Ahab, “Go, and prosper?”

Micaiah.

Micaiah. To satirize the folly that had presumed to dictate a lying message, as from the God of Truth; and to shew, how base sin made *even Princes*, scarce worthy a serious answer when hardened in it, and yet expecting fair and peaceful messages from Heaven. He saw the glaring irony with which I spoke, as his reply demonstrated.

Christian. Easy is thy account. Far different was thy irony from the grievous lies which the audacious prophets, whom he favoured, spoke. But often have I admired thy bold appeal to all the people present, when thou didst seriously denounce, that Ahab never should return in peace, and pawnedst the truth of thy prophetic mission on it; adding, "Hear, all ye people."

Micaiah. We knew, my heavenly friend, when God spoke to us, with as much certainty as thou once knewest when man spake to thee.

Christian. Just so have I regarded it, and frequently considered thine appeal to the people as an illustrious testimony of the certainty of prophetic knowledge; nor is it strange, that He who taught mankind to converse with certainty with each other, should have a method equally certain to communicate his pleasure to his servants.

Micaiah. But see a greater Prophet near!

Christian. I know thee, blest Elijah, like thy illustrious

lustrious forefather Enoch, by the body which thou wearest. I have often stood amazed at that majestic, awful word which thy Lord put into thy mouth, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain for this year, but according to my words."

Elijah. Yet well thou knowest I was a man subject to like passions with thee and others of my brethren, in their mortal state. My faith was greatly sunk, when Jezebel's hatred, and my own fatiguing flight led me to abandon the hope of my translation, and pray for death.

Christian. But soon thy fainting faith recovered strength to brave the wrath of Ahab, and charge his guilt upon him in Naboth's murder. Thou wert highly favoured, and dignified above the common rank of prophets. Who ever, besides Moses and thyself, were conformed to the Saviour's wondrous fast? And thy translation was an honour greater than any mortal had but Enoch.

Elijah. It was wondrous grace, indeed, that I stand so long distinguished from my fellow-saints. But when the Lord of Life shall celebrate his final triumph over death, a glorious multitude of future Saints, that shall "be alive and remain" upon earth, shall share this honour: and thou, and all the glorious separate spirits here, put on your first array,

array, and fill the celestial temple with new-formed bodies, like your Lord's.

Christian. Great day of triumph ! in thee it now
“ appears what we shall be.”

Abdiel. Next see, Elifha, on whom there was
“ a double portion of his Master's spirit.”

Christian. Great were thy predictions, and great thy miracles, distinguished prophet ; but chiefly wert thou honoured in thy grave itself, that contact with thy bones should raise a corpse to life.

Elifha. But I rose not. How much superior was our great Emmanuel, who burst the bonds of death himself, and raised many bodies of the Saints which slept, as an earnest of the more signal display of his power, when all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth !

Christian. O majestic voice ! what wonders will it exhibit even to the inhabitants of Heaven !

Abdiel. See Hezekiah.

Christian. How wert thou taught to know the Lord, holy King ? Not by thy father, Ahaz.

Hezekiah. No, but my grandfather, Jotham ; who seeing so dark a prospect concerning his son, bestowed the utmost care on the tender years of his grandson, that the entail of religion, though interrupted, might not be cut off from the family ; therein setting a pattern to aged Saints in future

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ages,

ages, whose immediate offspring might unhappily resemble *his*.

Hezekiah. Great was thy prevalence in prayer, when an army died at once before it; and fifteen years to thy life, and the revolving earth for once rolled back from east to west, and produced the wonderful phenomenon of the Sun's return, to confirm the prediction of thine own recovery, when sinking to the dust.

Hezekiah. But hast thou not observed my want of resignation to the will of God, and the sad consequence: that in those years I had a son, the once abandoned Manasseh, who opened a wide door for Judah's ruin, though himself, at last, a monument of mercy? And hast thou not observed, that I rendered not according to the benefit received?—Such was mortality; but boundless mercy pardoned me, and saved my son that worships with me.

Christian. Surprizing grace! But thousands here resemble thee and him. May I not call this glorious spirit Isaiah?

Isaiah. Dear stranger, I am he.

Christian. Blessed evangelical Prophet, surely thou must have searched what, or what manner of time the spirit which was in thee did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. So widely different
thy

thy predictions of a Saviour, whose soul should be made and offered for sin, and yet of the increase of his government and peace there should be no end.

Isaiab. I did, indeed, nor was the search in vain, though brighter light remained for thee.

Christian. I will join thy homage to him called wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. But now I learn the heavenly names, and salute the former sons of God.

Abdiel. See the excellent Josiah.

Christian. Dear Prince, whose tender heart became so shining a pattern to the young in following ages, how would my heart have leaped for joy to see many here, though of rank inferior!

Josiah. Yet some there were: and our God still has his servants, whose youth is holiness to the Lord.

Christian. Had thy ardent efforts produced their proper fruits, Judah had not known the Babylonish captivity.

Josiah. Nor would my sons have known the miseries they endured; nor Zedekiah have worn his fetters, and lost his eyes.

Abdiel. See Jeremiah near the King.

Christian. Thou mourning Prophet, now are all tears wiped from thine eyes, and thy dungeon exchanged

changed for this majestic palace. But thou hast had thy numerous followers, and many yet on earth are of thy character, and imitated thy Lamentations; if not in the ruin of the state of their native land, yet of sinners in it, whose crimes have threatened miseries to it, like those of which thou warnedst Jerusalem and Judah.

Jerem. b. The day comes, when their Lord will turn their murmurs also into Joy, and will comfort them, and make them rise from their sorrows.

Christian. In thee it is done; and thy joyful aspect, a pattern of theirs, soon to be so likewise.

Abdiel. See Daniel, and his three companions.

Christian. Ye heroic witnesses for God, whose fortitude the burning fiery furnace could not conquer, what an example did you set? And how many have you taught to despise dangers and tortures, if threatened with them in the service of their God! And thou, illustrious Daniel, what a pattern of steadfast prayer didst thou shew, when lions could not deter thee from it, or lead thee so much as to *seem* to neglect it!

Daniel. See in me and my three companions the happy fruits of the unshaken zeal with which the grace of God endued us.

Christian. I like it: I rejoice: I adore the bountiful Rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

Abdiel.

Abdiel. Next turn thine eyes to Joseph and Mary.

Christian. Ye honored spirits, what dignity was put upon you ! yet thou, blessed Mary, didst not aspire to the honors of thy divine Son.

Mary. My spirit now rejoices in God my Saviour further than when I first said it. He is my Lord, and I cheerfully worship him.

Christian. Yet all generations upon earth call thee blessed ; and we more happy beings call thee so likewise.

Mary. Here I am, loaded with honours, and I ask no more.

Christian. Yet surely a sword pierced through thy soul, when thou sawest thy Saviour extended in agony on the cross.

Mary. It did, indeed, both as a mother, and as one that looked for salvation through him. But now it is gloriously compensated by the honors of his Throne, by his boundless and eternal Empire, by the constant sight of these adoring armies, by millions saved by him ; above all, by his sitting at the Father's right hand, glorified with the glory which he had with him before the world was. Turn now thine eyes to these monuments of his Grace, Simeon and Anna.

Christian. Ye venerable spirits, whose words of
K 3 inspiration

inspiration delighted holy Mary, your lengthened pilgrimage was blessed with a glorious sight at last. Well didst thou, Simeon, say, " Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Simeon. We saw the rising sun, and shewed it to those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem; but Saints in following ages saw his risen beams of glory.

Christian. I saw it too; but here he shines in unclouded noon.

Simeon. See Lazarus, Mary, and Martha.

Christian. Ye favoured friends of Christ, that were honoured with entertaining him, what blessings ye derived from your divine Guest! And thou, Mary, who didst choose the better part, now findest that it shall not be taken from thee.

Mary. No! eternal ages cannot diminish its excellence; but it was *his* grace who gave it that instructed me to choose it.

Christian. The opened grave of your rising brother, was a rich compensation for the entertainment which the Lord of Life received at your house.

Mary. It was: but here He returns our hospitality with yet more glorious bounty.

Abdiel. See Mary Magdalen, the other Mary, and Salome.

Christian.

Christian. Ye faithful spirits, that followed the Lamb whithersoever he went, even to his cross and his sepulchre themselves, ye saw the thick clouds dispersed that before veiled the Sun of Righteousness, and wiped away your tears.

Mary Magdalen. We did, indeed: beauty was given us for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Christian. Thy obligations were scarcely peculiar to thyself. Out of thee, at his word, went seven devils; but in me too, and innumerable multitudes, the strong man armed kept the house, and the goods were in peace, till our divine Deliverer, stronger than he, came upon him, overcame him, and took away all his armour wherein he trusted.

Abdiel. Behold the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.—Peter first presents himself.

Christian. Dear, bold Apostle, what an instructive warning didst thou leave to me and others, not to trust in our firmest resolutions, but to rely upon the almighty Captain of our Salvation alone!

Peter. My weakness warned you, indeed; and thanks be to him who made it in so many instances effectual. But what grace I experienced when my Lord prayed for me, that my faith should not finally fail, and when he raised his fallen servant!

Christian. What multitudes among these hea-

venly hosts were raised like thee when fallen ; and now stand, firm as the everlasting pillars, on the rock of ages ? Thanks be to him who has established, strengthened, and settled us for ever.

Abdiel. See the beloved Apostle, and the other Evangelists.

Christian. Such signatures of love would surely have pointed out the favoured John, if thou hadst not. It was not in vain, O amiable spirit, that thou layest in Jesus' bosom. *His* soul seemed transfused into thine.—What a delightful companion shall I have in thee for ever ? And, ye dear historians of the life of Jesus, accept the thanks of one just arrived from earth, for the instruction and comfort received by your most interesting books. Oh ! what were all biographers below, in comparison with *you* ?

The Evangelists. Give all the honour to the great subject of our writings. Others speak of glow-worms ; we the Sun of Righteousness.

Christian. Every faculty I possess concurs in your proposal. I adore the great, the exalted Emmanuel, the sublimer theme on which you wrote : and bless *Him* that taught you to write his wondrous works, and his divine discourses so perfectly, and at the same time with a simplicity better suited to the capacities of the meanest of his followers.—But is not this the ardent Paul ?

Abdiel.

Abdiel. It is.

Christian. Dearest of human spirits, what a life of wonders was thine? First, the malignant persecutor, then the unwearied Apostle. What a change *that* Jesus, whom thou persecutedst, made in thee by the display of his glory, and the convincing, startling language he spoke! Past ages of the Church have called thee blessed; and those yet to come, to the latest period of time, shall call thee so; nor time alone, but eternity, shall prolong the appellation; while the millions assembled here, and hereafter to assemble, shall own the benefit received by thy discourses and epistles.

Paul. It is indeed a high honour that my persecuted, yet pardoning Lord, stooped to put upon me. My songs of praise shall join those of every spirit that arrived here from earth, profited by what he dictated to me. But see near thee, Stephen, the first witness for our blessed Jesus, whose blood sealed his testimony.

Christian. Dear martyr, thy name stands foremost in the Christian annals after thy suffering Lord. How wert thou honoured to behold, with eyes then mortal, the Heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, as if risen from his throne to espouse the cause of his suffering servant! Here are the happy effects of thy dying

prayer, in imitation of thy Saviour, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," in Paul above others.

Stephen. That spirit, then so malignant, did but forward me to these mansions of peace and love, and at length trod that bloody path which he drew for me. A cloud of witnesses went before us, from the days of righteous Abel : but few so honoured as I, to see their murderers now sharers in their bliss. But, see another cloud of witnesses behind that followed us.

*The Christian taking a View of the Martyrs
and other Saints in succeeding Ages.*

Abdiel.

THESE, these arrayed in white robes, are they that came out of great tribulation, who have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. See Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Aquila, Priscilla, Phœbe, and many others, whose names were, and ever stand in the book of life.—See, next to them, the first champions in the Christian cause, Ignatius, Justin, Martyr, Polycarp, and thousands besides: men that loved not their lives unto death for the sake of the testimony of Jesus. See, how bright their crowns! What joy and triumph sparkle in their eyes! Lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues! They stand before the Throne, and before the Lamb, all clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. See the victims which bloody Rome has offered, following them in an az-

ing numbers ; that came from prisons, racks, cunningly devised tortures, and most cruel deaths.

Christian. I have adored the grace while I was yet on earth, which carried them through their agonizing trials with such divine fortitude. I see with transport, their triumph, their glory, their innumerable myriads. Blessed for ever be the Captain of their Salvation, who loved them and made them more than conquerors. Here victory erects its everlasting standard to his praise ! Here are the faith and patience of the Saints : here are they who have kept the commandments of God, and the testimony of Jesus.

Abdiel. See millions more, whose names never reached thy ears on earth ; but they were the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ : they bore the Saviour's image ; they followed his divine steps ; and in them he sees of the travail of his soul : he regrets not one drop of the blood which flowed from him in his agonies ; not one insult he received, one blow given him, nor one stripe he endured : he rejoices in his thorny crown and all its piercing points ; in the nails that fixed him to his cross, the rending wounds while he hung there by that dreadful hold, for six hours lingering in torment : his servants gloried in the cross of Christ : he himself does so likewise ; it is the ground of
their

their eternal hope on earth, and *his* everlasting joy in Heaven ; while he sees this illustrious army rescued by his blood from the curse of the violated law, from Satan the great destroyer, from the plague of sin, from Hell wide waiting to receive them : now the favourites of the great King, adopted into a filial relation to the Father like his own, delivered from murderer's hands, healed of the malignant pestilence of which they were dying, raised from the jaws of the devouring pit ; crowned with immortal honours purchased by his blood, comely through *his* comeliness put upon them ; without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ;—the perfect joy of Heaven, the glory of eternity !

Christian. O, my dear Abdiel, thou hast kindled every affection, thou hast blown it up to a flame : I cannot delay to pay my tribute of gratitude to the glorious Immanuel.

Abdiel. Thou wilt not alone ; these glorious hosts will join thee, with transports like thine own.

Christian, and a Grand Chorus.

Spotless Lamb of God, and Author of Eternal Salvation, to all these untold multitudes, I and they come with one heart, and one voice, to the gracious throne ; confessing ourselves brands plucked
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ed out of the fire, to bless the hand that rescued us. Constrained by thy love, carried on by a resistless torrent of grace, we cannot be silent from thy praise. Once we were on the verge of ruin, and nothing but compassion like thine could have prevented our falling into misery; but thou beholdest our condition, thou didst leave thy Father's bosom, and the seats of endless light, and tookedst thy speedy flight, impelled by love, of which thou hadst no pattern, and which never can be followed by any equal to it: In obedience to the Father's pleasure, thou saidst, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God;" to save that ruined race which sacrifices and burnt-offerings cannot save. Adoring angels saw thy flight of love, and attended it with their song of, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will towards men." They saw thee wrapt in thy swaddling clothes, and thy manger; and Heaven as well as earth rang with thy praise. Persecuted infant, the Father's early servant, fatigued traveller, the incessant labourer for our salvation claims honours greater than even now we can pay. But thy dying grace, thy bleeding agonies in the garden, thy voluntary surrender of thyself, thy hands bound, thy majestic countenance disfigured more than any man's—thy bruises, thy wounded temples, thy back bleeding with its stripes, the bones

bones of thy hands and thy feet forced from their proper place by nails driven through the tender parts, thy weight suspended on them, thy prayer for thy murderers and for us, thy dying cry, thy bowing head, and expiring breath, thy bloody corpse and thy dark sepulchre shut up and guarded.—Unequal are even the praises of Heaven. We labour to express thy praise, but it is only a small part we can express: these crowns, these robes of light we wear, describe the rest. Accept, O adorned Emmanuel, our humble tribute.—We are wholly thine: it is our joy to be so for ever; and eternity shall present, if possible, yet more fervent gratitude, and songs of more ardent praise.

Emmanuel. Dear purchase of my blood, your praises are accepted. I will present them with improvement before my Father.

Christian, and Grand Chorus. Amen: Hallelujah.

Abdiel. The worship is not concluded.—I and my angelic brethren have ours to offer likewise.

Host of Angels. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing.

Christian. Dear fellow worshippers, what a lasting and delightful employment shall I have, to form an intimate acquaintance with you all!

Fellow-

Fellow-worshipping Saints and Angels. Not one of all this numerous host will be unwilling to form the most endeared acquaintance possible, nor fail to make returns of love equal to thine.

Christian. Point out, my Abdiel, Beveridge, Scougal, Scudder, Brise, Allen, Baxter, Mead, Shepherd, Firmin, and Ward, those servants of God whose writings instructed, quickened, and warned me.

Abdiel. See, they stand forth on the mention of their names.

Christian. Dear spirits, you were instruments of divine mercy to me, after you had left the world. I meet you as friends indeed, unknown upon earth; being dead, you yet spoke, and our gracious Lord spoke by you to my soul.

Beveridge, &c. Blessed spirit, we congratulate with joy thy arrival at these blissful mansions; and it adds to our happiness to have been God's instruments of contributing to it.

Christian. Oh! what delightful worship shall I offer with you!—Others stand forth my dear contemporaries, my fathers, my brethren in Christ.
* Saunders, the dear guide of my childhood;

* The Rev. Julius Saunders of Bedworth (the native place of the author) of whom the writer of this note has frequently heard him speak with pleasure.

Doddrige,

* Doddridge, of my riper age ; † Soame, the father of my youth ; Warne, Blake, Brown, and a numerous train besides, whom a gracious God raised up to be my helpers in Christ, or the dear companions and friends of my mortal state, with whom I have taken sweet and highly beneficial counsel, and gone to the house in company. I bless a gracious God for you.

Saunders, &c. Dear brother, our joy is great to meet thee here, and we will adore our gracious God and Saviour for ever with thee.

* To this very excellent man he was for several years a pupil while resident at his academy ; for whom he had a great respect ; but who is too well known to the Christian world to need any commendation.

† The Rev. David Soame, of Market-Harborough, Leicestershire. This gentleman was rendered peculiarly serviceable to Mr. Reader respecting eternal concerns : so that he commonly stiled him, “ my spiritual father.” Mr. Soame was the author of two excellent Discourses, and Explanatory Notes, with Practical Remarks, on the Assembly’s Catechism.

*A Specimen of the Christian's Tour through the
Works of God.*

“**G**O, Abdiel, saith the Lord, and lead my Christian, with others of my newly-arrived sons, to view the displays of my almighty power.”

Christian. Indulgent Father, who hast so often presented us with the blessings of thy goodness, thou still continuest to favour us, and waitest not for our requests, but givest thy gracious orders according to our wishes. We bow before thee with general prostrate reverence and delight, and will celebrate thy honours from the remotest parts of thine unbounded empire.

Abdiel. We bend our flight first to thy late abode—the earth.

Christian. See here, what endless variety prevails in plants and trees, in birds and beasts, and the inhabitants of the deep: Wisdom unsearchable stands conspicuous in each. O earth! how mean thy philosophy to that which Heaven teaches, and to which our angelic guide conducts us! Here we stand, admire, and adore: but these are the beginning

ginning of God's wonders. We view the highest mountains, and the most profound abysses, and each afford new cause for our astonishment. We pass through every clime—We view the frozen zones—We view the poles themselves, to which mortals could never penetrate: Such the advantage of our disembodied state. We view the various nations of the earth, the great, the small; continents and islands—Oh! what a day will that be, when the knowledge of the glory of God, and the grace of Jesus our Saviour, shall fill the whole, as the waters cover the sea!—But say, dear celestial guide, if already thou knowest by what means will our almighty Father accomplish this wonderful work, when the languages of the earth are so numerous? Shall the day of Pentecost be renewed, and new Apostles, with the Spirit's power, to fly to spread the bright favour of the knowledge of Christ to earth's remotest corners?

Abdiel. George, thy late sovereign on earth has been paving the way, by the discoveries which Cook and others have been employed to make, and the acquaintance they began to form with the most distant and unknown inhabitants of the earth. When the glorious day arrives, our heavenly Father will not want his instruments to accomplish his glorious pleasure. Already has war begun to
disperse

disperse the British inhabitants of America into its inland parts; some of whom, or their descendants, shall spread the Gospel there. And the number of languages in that extensive region is diminishing by the number of Indian schools, which teach the children of the natives the English tongue, and also by their intercourse with other European nations. When these are reduced, both in America, Africa, and Asia, within a small number, there will be no further obstruction from that cause to the spread of the Gospel, in those several continents and islands near, or at a distance from them. They also shall themselves seek an acquaintance with converted Jews and Christians, and fulfil that prophetic word of Zechariah afresh (Zechariah viii. 23.) "That ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you. The prediction of another prophet shall then likewise be accomplished (Zephaniah iii. 9.) "I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent."

Christian. Illustrious day! I spring forward with joyful expectation to meet it: nor shall any of the heavenly spirits welcome it with greater delight.

Abdiel.

Abdiel. But now thou only takest a transient view both of the earth and other worlds : hereafter, with thy glorious Father's permission, always readily granted, thou shalt survey each more minutely ; nor wilt thou want companions, either of those already inhabiting Heaven, or of those that shall yet arrive at our blissful world.

* *Thaumazon.* Other worlds did our dear Abdiel say ? I am one of those newly arrived sons of God included in the gracious permission to view our Creator's works. But my days upon earth were spent in obscurity, where I scarcely heard of other worlds ; or at least, had no sufficient evidence of there being such. Dost thou then, heavenly guide, confirm it ?

Abdiel. I do : nor was it a necessary consequence of thy obscurity, that thou shouldest remain ignorant that there were such, to the present glorious day, when Isaiah had said (Isaiah xlv. 18.) " Thus saith the Lord who created the Heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it ; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited."—But thou wilt soon see other globes as large and fit for habitation as the earth,

* From the Greek θαυμάζω, to wonder, be in admiration.

and

and some of them favoured with greater marks of God's gracious regard : for the earth had but one moon, but Jupiter four, and Saturn five ; unknown to all mankind till the fountain of wisdom directed to the construction of telescopes, by which they became visible to the few who had opportunity of using them. These other orbs could not be made in vain any more than the earth, therefore the inference appears natural, they also were made to be inhabited.

Thaumazon. Thy reasoning, Abdiel, carries conviction with it. How inattentive was I to the Scriptures not to have learnt it ; like those that learnt not a future state from God's being the God of Abram, Isaac and Jacob, many ages after their decease ; until Jesus our illustrious prophet, pointed out its evidence from God's not being the God of the dead, but of the living. But tell me and others of these junior spirits therefore, dear Abdiel, how the *other* part of the consequence follows—that the dead should rise again ? For I was one of Christ's little ones, and understood it not upon earth ; though I was satisfied it could not be otherwise, because infinite wisdom had declared it.

Abdiel. With the utmost readiness, dear brother. God's being *their* God, necessarily implies the happiness of their *whole nature* ; but he could not be
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to to their bodies, were they left always in the dust, therefore they must rise again, that God might show himself the God of *that* part of their nature also.

Thaumazon. Dear brother, thy words give light, where the former want of it was less excusable than ignorance of the full meaning of the prophetic words; where there was no knowledge of such unseen globes of which thou speakest, which only appeared upon earth sparks of light, and all the wonderful provision made for them was unknown.

Abdiel. Dear spirit, thou lovedst the word of God: it taught thee to know Jesus Christ and him crucified, though it did not make thee a philosopher. It made thee wise to salvation; therefore both wiser and happier than many that assume that name.

Thaumazon. Blessed be that holy spirit who inspired the word, gave it to me, and taught me thence the way to life.

* *Attonitus.* I also am one of the least of Christ's brethen, and know not these things of which thou speakest. But what are the inhabitants of those worlds? Are they fallen, like those on earth? And

* From the Latin, signifying one *astonished, thunder-struck.*

if they are, are any of them saved, and by what wonderful means?

Abdiel. Jesus our Lord answers thy question, Matthew xviii. 12, 13. "How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and goeth and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, that he rejoiceth more over that sheep, than over the ninety and nine which went not astray."

Attonitus. I always understood, that either the ninety and nine signified the angels who kept their first estate; or that the mention of them was barely an ornamental circumstance of the parable.

Newton. The latter could not be, because the whole force and beauty of the parable depended upon the great disproportion of the lost to the ninety and nine that went not astray; by which our Lord illustrates the riches of his grace in all that he underwent for the recovery of fallen man. And the Scriptures gave thee no reason to suppose, that the number of the holy angels so greatly exceeded that of Adam's fallen race. I likewise subjoin, that angels were so many individual beings, but it was not only one of human kind who went astray, but Adam's whole posterity, which constituted

constituted a world that was lost, which the son of man came to save. Therefore, to support the justice of the antithesis, the ninety and nine that went not astray, must be supposed to signify many worlds that preserved their integrity.

Attonitus. Is then the number of the holy worlds just ninety and nine?

Newton. That is not at all necessary to be supposed, since in Luke's sacred narrative of the case our Lord had mentioned of an hundred sheep, he varies the number in a subsequent parable: Luke xv. 8. and speaks of a woman who had ten pieces of silver, and lost one, who lighted a candle, swept the house, and sought diligently till she found it. Our Lord, therefore, by this charge of the number plainly intimated, that it was not his intention to teach us the exact proportion; but that the holy worlds was great, and that but *one* world was lost. And thou wilt soon perceive, that the number of the worlds which remained faithful to their Creator, is much greater than either of these numbers.

Attonitus. But this sacred writer related our Lord's words thus: Verse 7, I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just

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persons

persons which need no repentance. Now, does not the word, *person*, fix his meaning to mankind?

Newton. Perhaps it would, had it been expressed in the original tongue; but as it is not, it may, without the least impropriety, be understood, for many just beings that need no repentance, wherever they are to be found. But certainly, so many just persons that need no repentance cannot be found upon earth; nor so much as one; since, as the apostle observes, Romans iii. 10, 12. There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Ninety and nine just beings that need no repentance; therefore, must be sought in other worlds.

Antonius. But does not our Lord's words yet signify individuals, especially as opposed to one sinner that repenteth?

Newton. It is acknowledged, my dear brother: but as all worlds consist of individuals, so our beloved Redeemer's words in Luke express, that there is joy in Heaven over one sinner upon earth that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just beings, in other worlds, that need no repentance: and in like manner, there is more joy in Heaven over the whole number of repenting sinners

ners in this world, than over the whole number of holy happy beings in other worlds. Luke's words, therefore, immediately relate to individuals, as a specimen of the worlds, and Matthew's words to the whole collection of worlds.*

Atonitus. Dear Newton, thou hast obviated the difficulty, and laid a more ample foundation for the Saviour's praise, than earth ever taught me.

Christian. Such were my reasonings upon earth, and I have sometimes looked up with pleasure in the starry heavens and cried, "there live the ninety and nine that went not astray!"

Newton. Didst thou ever while there conjecture at the number of those inhabited worlds.

Christian. I did, and it delighted me to think how numerous they are.

Newton. What number didst thou suppose; and upon what principles didst thou proceed to obtain it?

Christian. I considered that the number of fixed stars, visible to the naked eye, was about 4000; but in the space commonly called the seven stars,

* Our author has, I conceive, rather accommodated these words to his astronomical views and calculations, than explained them agreeably to the obvious design of our Lord: namely, to encourage humble penitents, and rebuke the conceited Pharisees.

seventy-two have been counted by a telescope. Supposing then the whole number increased in the same proportion, the whole of the fixed stars 48,000, which must be suns, because of their immense distance, and the vivid light of many of them: I supposed them therefore, to have upon a medium, the same number of planets rolling round each, as the sun that enlightened this earth has; that is, six primary ones, which made the number 288,000; but adding to each a like number of secondary planets to those which revolved round the primary ones in the solar system: various also I concluded to be unseen to smaller worlds, these made 480,000 more, which being added to the former number, amounted to 768,000, and still increasing the number of the fixed stars by those numerous telescopic stars, which constitute what we called the milky way; I presumed that the number of unseen holy worlds could scarce be less than 800,000.

Newton. Thy conjecture, however adventurous, did not make the number of fixed stars in the milky way nearly large enough, and therefore falls greatly short of the true, especially as there are nebulous spots in the starry heavens, which seen through a telescope have the same appearance

as the milky way to our unassisted eye while we were mortal.

Christian. Well might the adoring Psalmist insert it in his praises of God (Psal. cxlvii. 4, 5.) He telleth the number of the stars, he calleth them all by their names ! And, in how pleasing a connection does it lie ! Immediately after follows the gracious words, he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up all their wounds.

Atonitus. Never did my astonishment on earth arise so high, as you dear spirits have raised it ! I called the Majesty of Heaven infinite, and adored him with prostrate admiration and awe ! But little did I know of what was implied in that word; this wonderful induction of particulars has enlarged my conceptions to a degree not to be expressed. Is this then Jehovah's great dominion, this the boundless empire of the king, the Lord of hosts ? My whole soul adores him in a far different manner from any in which I worshipped him upon earth !

Newton. Add to all this that immensity of knowledge, which every moment understands every event in all these numerous worlds, even the most minute, every action, every word, every thought of every creature, which people this his most amazing empire; no wonder then the Psalmist

adds in the 5th verse, "Great is the Lord, and of great power, his understanding is infinite."

Attonitus. I shrink into nothing before him. I am less than vanity in my own eyes; when I look up to God; and yet this infinite Majesty stooped to regard me in my low estate. He heard my broken heart, and bound up my wounds. He fulfilled my desires: he heard my cry, and saved me with this great eternal salvation which I now possess.

Attonitus. Oh Gabriel! oh ye brightest spirits of heaven! had I understanding like you, I would vie with your praises to the King, the Lord of worlds so amazingly numerous.

Christian and Newton. Oh ye astonished spirits, with you we fall, with you we adore, and unequal as we yet are to those first born sons of God, we well vie with them, we well hearken to their songs, till we have learned them likewise, for we also can say with transporting extacy, this God is our God for ever and ever!

Attonitus, and the chorus of instructed junior spirits in Heaven.

Oh the amazing thought! O the infinite condescension of our Almighty Father, and the blessed eternity that we are to enjoy; this our boundless portion! What was every thing upon earth to this, what were crowns, what imperceptible

ceptible points were empires, or earth itself. Yet sadder things than they once drew off our hearts from God. Oh infatuation beyond expression ! Such was the state to which we were falling : such the malignity of sin to produce such an effect ; but greater than ever, heavenly spirits can speak, was the virtue of that blood which redeemed us, and the riches of that grace which saved us.

Newton. Before we quit our present station, observe, dear kindred spirits, the beautiful order in which those numerous worlds are placed, as seen from hence, which on earth appear without any regularity.

Christian. I see it, Newton, and admired the consummate wisdom of the divine architect. On earth our view of the ways of Providence was so imperfect, that they seemed an inexplicable maze ; but here we see them all plain paths, by which the boundless wisdom of the Infinite pursued its end, without deviation, as dear Flavil taught here upon earth ; but we see it here far more clearly, than he could then discern. Hereafter I hope with him to enter upon the study of the grand history of Providence.

Newton. Thou wilt have innumerable fellow-students, and great and extensive as this history is, so far as it respects that lower world from which

we came, it bears no greater proportion to the whole, than the earth itself bears to all the other works of God. Thou hast the history of Providence to study in its conduct to all the innumerable inhabitants of the innumerable worlds.

Christian. Delightful thought! where shall I begin, and where shall I end.

Newton. Thou wilt begin with the creation of the angels, with the history of the fallen and apostate spirits now and for ever in prison; thou wilt peruse the book of the wars of the Lord against them, and see how they were routed when Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the Dragon and his angels fought and prevailed not, neither was there place found any more in Heaven. But thou askest also, where shall I end? thou wilt never end; for as the history of the earth was swelling from age to age, and will till there shall be time no longer; so the grand history of Providence will be still swelling with new wonders of power, wisdom and mercy, as long as eternity endures.

Christian. Thou hast pointed out an everlasting employment for us; such as will fill our endless duration with astonishment and delight. See, my dear brethren, what a rich feast our God prepares for us.

Junior

Junior instructed Spirits. We see it with delight equal with thy own ! Well might it be said the tree of life bears twelve manner of fruits, and brings forth its fruits every month.

Newton. Observe here, likewise, my brethren, what made the milky way, as it was called upon earth, appear like a broad belt encompassing the visible heavens. The universe bears the form of an immense cylinder, whose axis, from its top to its bottom, bears but a small proportion to the diameter of its base, when therefore upon earth we looked into other parts of the starry heaven, we looked through the basis of it; but when we looked into the milky way, we looked through its sides, and there the immense multitude of stars confound our sight, and produced that wonderful appearance, as Stukely thought, when upon earth.

Christian. So the great Jehovah taught one of his creatures upon earth, one part of knowledge, and another other parts, which heaven confirms; and thee, great Newton, he taught more with relation to the visible frame of nature than perhaps to any other, and made thee an instructor to mortals below, and now to immortals above.

Newton. Yet what things were gain to me; those, with our beloved brother Paul, I count loss

for Christ, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Christian. Heaven taught thee the estimate; for he has loved us and given himself for us an offering, and a sacrifice unto God, for a sweet smelling favor, and we are all made accepted in the beloved.

Thaumazen. Say, dear instructor, do the inhabitants of those holy worlds know our gracious Emmanuel?

Newton. Undoubtedly they do; for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him, whether they inherit heaven or earth, or the other planetary worlds of the solar system; or, of the remotest system in the creation. And notwithstanding that fallen world from which we came, knew him not, though made by him. John i. 10. Yet it was not so in those worlds of unclouded knowledge, and untainted purity, and in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he will gather together in one all things in Christ.

Christian. Oh illustrious body and divine head!

Autoritas. Say farther, dear heavenly philosopher, do those inhabitants of the remotest worlds,
know

know our fallen state, and what Saviour died for us.

Newton. Yes, otherwise, they could pay him but a part of the glory due to his name; as we were taught on earth by the Scripture, the state of the angelic nature, part of which is irrecoverably fallen, and a part stands for ever by confirming grace, and the holy state of other worlds, though less explicitly so, divine revelation runs through all the extent of creation, and has made these our distant brethren acquainted with our fall, and the grace of Christ in dying to save us, and they expect to see him in the human form which he assumed for us.

Christian. How should I rejoice to make the grand tour of all the works of God. To see these his distant servants, and hear their adorations.

Newton. Thou wilt, my brother; for as the heavenly spirits desire nothing but what is wise and good, so their heavenly Father denies them nothing; and this thy future visit will redound to his glory, and put yet a new song into thy mouth, ever praise to our God and his incarnate image; but my present commission extends no farther; when any new command is given, I shall execute it with the same pleasure as I have done this.

Instructed Spirits. We thank thee, heavenly Father, for the information given us, and we return with thee to the Almighty throne, to pay our homage for this fatherly indulgence.

Christian and Instructed Spirit. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power, for thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Rev. iv. 11. And oh! thou bright image of the invisible God, the first begetter of every creature! we praise thee with thine Almighty Father, for thou art before all things, and by thee all things subsist, Col. i. 15—17. We who with all these glorious beings are the work of thy power, and monuments of thy love, offer thee our humble adoration for the things thou hast taught us by thy servant Newton. Almighty architect who hast formed all this thy most extensive dominion, how stupendous the fabrick! we have seen thy empire, how amazing, and thy subjects innumerable! how penetrating thine eye which beholds the whole at one view, and the thoughts and actions of each every moment, without any confusion! Lord, what art thou? Self-existent, immense, unsearchable, and yet, by the strangest condescension, thou art our God, our exceeding great reward. Blessed for ever be that grace, which beheld us in our blood,
and

and said to us, live; that thou didst “so love the world, as to give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish; but have everlasting life.” And thee, O blessed Emmanuel! we praise, that thou didst come from heaven, to seek and to save that which was lost; suffered all those wounds, the bright scars of which we see in thy hands, thy feet, thy side, and thy head; while mountains of distress lay heavy on thy soul, that thou shouldest rescue us from Satan, from sin, from hell, and shouldest bring us to these seats of bliss, to this fulness of joy in thy presence, and these rivers of pleasure, that are at thy right hand for ever and ever. In vain do we attempt to pay thee praise proportioned to our boundless obligations. Eternity itself will be insufficient to do it. Purchased by thy precious blood; we adore, we bless, we extol that abounding grace which gave it for our ransom. Accept, oh holy, gracious Father! and thou, equally holy, and merciful Son! a tribute too mean; but the best that we can pay to endure for ever.

The voice from the Throne. He that offereth praise glorifieth me, your incense of gratitude comes up as a sweet favor before me, the Lord your God rejoices over you with joy, rests on his love, and joys over you with singing. Zeph. iii. 17.

The

*The Heavenly Spirit reviewing Hell.**Christian.*

WHAT means, my Abdiel, this silence in Heaven, as once on the Lamb's opening the seventh seal. Rev. viii. 1.

Abdiel. A tremendous scene opens, which will soon be followed with a shout of praise from the whole heavenly host. A distant view of the world of misery is sometimes given us, as a mean for ever effectually to confirm us all in our holiness and happiness, and add new raptures to our songs; sometimes some converse is admitted, as when the rich man in hell called from thence to Abraham, and received his answers. The miserable prisoners there are tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. Rev. xiv. 10. See the smoke of their torment is dispersed by the divine command. Lo, Hell is naked before us, Job xxvi. 6, and destruction now has no covering.

Christian, and his lately glorified Companions. Behold horror in perfection! how immense the spectacle! scarce the eye of spirits reaches its fullest extent.

tent. Here hell is flaming more dreadfully than when Sodom fell, or even than the great conflagration of the world from whence we came. There blackness of darkness more tremendous than the plagues of Egypt involves its wretched inhabitants, and almost hides them from our view. What wild uproar ! multitudes rage like litigious drunkards, and vent their horrid curses upon each other's guilty head ; others shriek, as if dying under the murderer's hand ; others groan like those in agonies of pain ; others lie in the depths of despair. Behold their horrid visage ! scarce the devils themselves have a more terrible form than sinners of the human race, while their frightful aspects, and cruel insults, heighten the scene beyond all mortal imagination ; beyond ours, before we beheld and heard these dreadful things. How bitter their mutual reproaches, and execrations, every one meaning to vie with the rest to make each other's misery ; if possible, more insupportable.

Abdiel. Attend to their several terrific classes. There, first, are the murderers, and chief of them the persecutors of the Saints, with Cain at their head, who first shed human, unoffending, holy blood, even that of his own brother ; here, how he shrieks, in the same language as when the sentence of divine justice was first passed upon him,

“ my

“ my punishment is greater than I can bear.” And yet as if it had been but light, thousands have followed him in the same bloody paths. See the cruel Antiochus Epiphanus, who murdered, by shocking tortures the pious woman, and her seven sons : Herod the Great, who killed the children at Bethlehem, aiming thereby to kill the holy child Jesus—Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist—Caiaphas and Pilate, who crucified the Lord of Life and Glory—Herod Agrippa, who killed the Apostle James with a sword—Nero, who murdered the Apostle Paul, with many other Christians—Dioclesian, the great persecutor of the church, under the fifth seal, Rev. 6—9, &c. See also the bloody Mary, Queen of England, and her equally bloody tools, Gardiner and Bonner—Charles the IX. in France, who ordered the French massacre, and himself died rolling in his own blood, with a large tribe of the same spirit. The fires that some of them kindled against the martyrs of the Lord, are recompensed with more lasting flames ; and the tortures which others of them inflicted on the Saints are repaid with more grievous torture of their own.

Christian. Once when upon earth, I shuddered in reading the narratives of their cruelty ; now if heavenly spirits could do it, I should shudder at their abyss of misery.

Abdiel.

Abdiel. See another large tribe of unjust warriors, with Nimrod at their head.—See Alexander and Cæsar, and other names of pride and ambition, unrelenting for the devastations they spread wherever they came, multitudes slaughtered, and greater multitudes made wretched by their means. See a specimen of what passes perpetually in their gloomy strife; a view of these gloomy regions was given the King of Babylon at his arrival there; we saw and heard the reception he met with, “Hell was moved from beneath, at his coming:” Isa. xiv. 4—11. it stirred up the dead from him, even all the chief ones of the earth, raised up from their visionary thrones all the kings of the nations, and they addressed them in jeering strains: “Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like one of us? How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning, &c.”

Christian. What did the unhappy being say on his grievous fall?

Abdiel. He said, at first, I am come to the end of a pleasing dream.

*The Christian renewing his Acquaintance with
former Friends upon Earth.*

Christian.

BESIDES the dear kindred spirits that meet me on my way from earth, I see a friendly group of spirits collecting, and approaching to welcome my arrival here.

Friendly Spirits. That indeed is our view, to tell thee how we rejoiced to see thee rescued from all the adversary's devices, sanctified and made meet for the inheritance of the Saints in light, and now joined with us in these glorious regions. We unite with thee in thy adorations of the grace of God, that brought thee hither.

Christian. I thank you, ye dear former and now my everlasting friends: I meet you with the utmost joy, and bless a gracious God for you. I need not, my beloved Abdiel, to inform me who you are; your shining appearance bears such a resemblance to your mortal forms, that I thereby remember you. Ye laboured in your declining years to transfuse into my soul, and the souls of others, those holy principles which reigned in your own,
and

and afterward to confirm them, and guard me from the dangers that threatened youth; and, thanks to the same grace, you laboured not in vain, as I and other happy spirits here can joyfully attest.

Friendly Spirits. This is the way our Father's wisdom commonly takes to transmit, from age to age, the knowledge, love, and service of himself, through the several ages of the world; and by these the inhabitants are more strongly united in bonds of endeared affection to each other. Thou thyself also hast attempted the like.

Christian. Oh that it had been with equal success! The first, dear Saunders, I acknowledge, whom my guardian Lord appointed the guide of my tender years, but age soon separated thee from my early youth; an heavenly order bid thee enter into the joy of thy Lord, but not till thou hadst been jointly with my honoured parents the happy instrument of sowing the seed of religion in my mind, thou excitedst me, and others of the young with me, to social prayer, wherein I first began to taste the sacred pleasures of religion, some of the sweetest I ever knew upon earth. Oh! that all schoolmasters and ministers did the same. I remember a walk which thou calledst me to take with thee, not for relaxation and exercise alone, but to seek my spiritual good: I remember thy enquiry,

quiry, how it was with my soul? and when I complained of strong corruptions and temptations, thou askedst whether I had not learnt to conquer sin by faith in Christ? I answered, that when I was under temptations to sin, I endeavoured to set before me the love of Christ, in dying for me, as an engagement against yielding to it, thy reply was to this effect, that is right, but there is a farther exercise of faith in Christ, faith in the grace and power of Christ, which thou endeavouredst to explain to me thus: when you find corruptions struggling, and Satan assaulting you, turn to Christ in some such manner as this: Lord, here is a corruption and temptation, and I a poor sinful worm, am in danger of being carried away with it, but I have heard from thy word, that in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength, and that the grace of Christ is sufficient for me. I come to make trial of it; now, Lord, show what thy almighty grace can do, to render a feeble creature victorious over it. I endeavoured to follow thy wise and pious advice; and I think none that was ever given me in my mortal state did me so much good as that; and one, to whom I have since related it, told me, it had the like happy effect upon him.

Saunders. I well remember these things. I bless our Father's grace, which put such advice into my heart,

heart, and fixed it upon thine with good effect; and upon another since by thy means, and with like advantage.

Christian. I have heard thee speak of one, that was a like blessing to thy youth, as thou wert to mine.

Saunders. There the blessed spirit worships; but came not with us to congratulate thy arrival, as his day so much preceded thine, but thou wilt find him a dear companion in these illustrious realms.

Christian. Thou wert an early sufferer for Christ, unrighteously imprisoned, in that unhappy monarch's reign, whom some have falsely called the good-natured monarch *, but whose life was spent in sensuality, oppression, and persecution of the people of God, though warned by the calamities that befel his father. But thou wert faithful and stedfast, and the honoured instrument of planting one of our churches.

Saunders. Blessed for ever be that grace which strengthened my suffering youth, and carried me on in my Lord's work to old age.

Christian. And how eminently was thy life blessed, both in its early stages and in its last year,

* Our Author means Charles the Second, King of England.

when thy fervent prayers were answered by thy seeing near fifty young persons ask their way to Sion, with their faces thitherward, most of whom are now thy joy and crown of rejoicing in this world. And here, my glorious, much esteemed Saunders, and all you my dear friends, with myself too, shall have abundant cause to bless God to eternity, that he hath by his grace conducted us safe to this blissful abode; and that whilst on earth, we yielded mutual assistance to each other on the way to this glorious world, to this state of everlasting felicity! *unto him that loved, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Thanksgiving

*Thanksgiving and Prayer for those in
Authority, recommended.*

A SERMON

PREACHED AT

WAREHAM, in DORSETSHIRE.

May the 5th, 1763 :

Being the Day of PUBLIC THANKSGIVING for
the PEACE with FRANCE and SPAIN.

By S. READER.

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A S E R M O N,

Ec. Ec. Ec.

1 Tim. ii. 2.

*For Kings, and for all that are in Authority;
that we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life
in all Godliness and Honesty.*

THOUGH our great business, as private persons, is to mind well the concerns of our own souls with God, and to walk in an exemplary manner among those about us, studying to do all the good we can, within our own little circle of acquaintance; yet we are also bound to extend our views to the welfare of the Public, to be touched with its calamities, and rejoice in every occurrence of Providence that is favourable to it, to pray for public mercies, and solemnly to return thanks to God for them, when we receive them. If the Jewish captives in Babylon were, by divine order,

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Jer.

Jer. xxix. 7. *to seek the peace of the city, whither God hath caused them to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; because in the peace thereof they should have peace;* how evidently are we yet more strongly bound, to seek, to rejoice in, and to pray for the continuance of the peace of the land of our nativity, in which our own is so essentially concerned?

The Apostle having exhorted in the foregoing verse, that *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks should be made for all men*, adds especially in the text, *for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty*: and the exhortation is evidently particularly suitable for such an occasion as the present. A day of thanksgiving for public mercies, is also to be a day of supplication and prayer, for the continuance of them to us, for those that are the instruments of them in the hand of divine Providence, and for ourselves, and our fellow subjects, that we may make a right use of them, by leading a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, when a gracious God gives us the utmost advantage for it, by public peace and liberty.

Let us attend to the several parts of the duty here enjoined us, as those that are concerned to be obedient

obedient to all God's commandments, and to answer the end of all his goodness, in public as well as private mercies. I observe then that it is our duty, as men, and as Christians, to give thanks and pray—for Kings—for all that are in authority over us—for peace between our own and other nations—and for the continuance of the same blessing among ourselves—and that it is our further duty to lead a quiet and peaceable life—to do it in all godliness—and in all honesty.

1. We are commanded to give thanks and pray for kings.—Magistracy, supreme, and subordinate, is of God's institution, though the particular forms of it are left undetermined; as the Apostle teaches us, Rom. xiii. 1. *For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.* And it is manifestly a most wise and gracious institution, and greatly adapted for the public good; without which indeed * *the earth would be filled with violence*, as it was just before the flood, and all manner of corruption and cruelty and abomination would be practised without controul. 'Tis spoken of as a dreadful judgment, Hab. i. 4. *when God makes men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things that have no ruler over them.* There is there-

* Gen. vi. 13.

fore much cause to offer thanksgivings to God for kings, as upon the whole a great blessing to mankind, notwithstanding the just censure to which the behaviour of many of them is liable; and much need to pray for them, that God would inspire them with sentiments of equity and peace, that he would give them a sense of the duty of their exalted stations, and direct them to discharge it aright, for the general benefit of mankind.

But Britons, and especially in the present age, have cause above the inhabitants of almost any other nation, to *give thanks* for a succession of mild and gracious Sovereigns, that God has given us; and for his present Majesty in particular, in whom several things have appeared, that discover greater regard to religion, and to the welfare of his subjects, than is often found in Princes, or has been found in far the greater part of our own. What Prince but himself ever gave such an admonition to those that were to preach before him, as we have been informed he gave; “That they should forbear all flattering speeches, and deliver their great master’s messages with the spirit, force, and freedom of the Gospel?” How few Princes have shown greater, or indeed equal personal devotion; or taken more important and prudent steps for the discouragement of profaneness among the great, according

cording to a variety of accounts concerning him, to which indeed nothing contradictory has appeared ! and we have so much the more reason to give thanks for such things, considering his early youth, and the variety of temptations to which he is exposed. Under what Prince has greater success attended our arms, and Britain been more exalted among the nations? a circumstance which ought to endear him to us, as the instrument of such abundant mercy, and to engage our thanksgivings to God on his account.

These things ought also to engage our ardent prayers, that God would be the guide of his youth, that he would teach him the way in which he should go, give him wise and faithful counsellors, such as should be steadfast friends to himself, and his royal house, and to the public peace and welfare, make his reign long and prosperous, continue to us the great privileges we enjoy by his means, and teach the inhabitants of this land, the duty and gratitude they owe to so mild and gracious a Prince ; that God would give to him and his royal consort an abundant blessing in the infant Prince, endow him too betimes with wisdom and grace, and fit him for Government, when at some distant period he may be called to it ; that the crown may be continued in the present illustrious

family, and the whole royal house be most blessed for ever.

2. We are directed to give thanks and pray, for all that are in authority.

It becomes us to *give thanks* for inferior governors, as bearing their part in contributing to the public good: and for those, in particular, whom our Sovereign employs near his person, as having acted so far as they have for the public welfare and advantage. Blessed be God, that whatever censures may be passed upon those that have been, or are in the high offices of state, they have hitherto taken no step, nor shewn any disposition to take any, injurious to our religious liberties, which are so peculiarly precious to those that fear God, and which have been grievously invaded and trodden under foot in former reigns, and by the ministry that has then been employed. And if some steps have been taken that have been displeasing, there's reason thankfully to acknowledge that they don't appear to proceed from any design injurious to our civil liberties, but rather to be such mistakes in conduct as all mankind are liable to, if, indeed, they are mistakes at all, and not really misapprehended by the people, or misrepresented by those that are given to change, and disappointed of the greatness and authority to which they aspire,
and

and if they are mistakes, we have reason from experience to conclude, that they will be corrected, as far as possible, as soon as they are perceived to be such.

The different ranks of magistrates afford occasion also for thanksgiving, as distributing justice in general with so much impartiality, and maintaining the order and regularity of society in so great a degree, and so effectually protecting the lives and property of individuals.

We are also to *pray* for those in authority over us, that God would graciously make them wise, good, and faithful to the King and their fellow-subjects; that he would heal their divisions among themselves, and teach them to obey that divine order, Phil. ii. 4. *Look not every one on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*; that God would give them wisdom to act a-right themselves, and to give good counsel to their Sovereign; that he would make them examples to the people, and render them, in yet higher degrees, great and general blessings, mindful of justice and of the public peace, and especially teach them to have regard to the things that belong to their own eternal peace.

3. We are bound to give thanks and pray for peace betwixt this and other nations around us.

The war which we have just concluded, bloody and calamitous as it has been to mankind, yet has itself afforded us abundant cause of thanksgiving, as it has been attended with such various and astonishing successes, that but a small part of it in former wars would have appeared just ground of much thankfulness: But we have been so much accustomed to success and victory, that the value of these, like that of other mercies when they become common, has been greatly sunk in our esteem. It has been a signal mercy to us, that amidst the ravages of war abroad, we have enjoyed peace in our own borders, that our coasts have been protected from invasion, and our tranquility at home been as great as if there had been no war at all. What shall we render to the Lord for so great and distinguished a blessing, while so many other lands have endured the scourge in a dreadful degree, been terrified greatly with *the confused noise of the warrior and garments rolled in blood**, and suffered such grievous hardships and violent oppressions.

But it is to every humane mind, special cause of thanksgiving, that the violence and terrors of war are now ceased, and that our fellow-subjects are now no longer dying by the sword, and other ne-

* Isai. ix. 5.

cessary hardships of war ; that parents have no longer reason for the terrible anxiety which many must have felt for their children, wives for their husbands, and other relatives for those that were dear to them, who were exposed to the most alarming dangers. That there's no longer need of any violence to engage persons in the service of their country, nor any other hazards remaining, than those which arise in the common course of nature, or in their usual or chosen employments.

The peace we have made, if not altogether equal to the wishes of every heart, as indeed, perhaps, scarce any peace could have been, yet is such as has raised us to a wider extent of dominion, and more weakened our enemies, than perhaps any other peace that Britain ever made. What important acquisitions were Cape Breton, Fort du Quesne, Crown-Point, and Canada esteemed, when they were made? Witness our illuminations and other public rejoicings; and are they sunk into little things now they are become our settled property by a definitive treaty? It deserves also particular attention, how dear Spain pays for her short and unprovoked intrusion in the quarrel betwixt us and France, by the loss of Florida, which has been formerly esteemed dangerous to our Southern Colonies. Perhaps too the present peace is as good as

the circumstances we were in would admit, without continuing the war to a further unknown length, loading us with a still more enormous debt, and increasing the distress so much complained of before the peace, of the want of hands in all kinds of business. And had we kept more of our extensive conquests, it must have required many of our people to preserve them, and thus continued that distress, and perhaps really weakened us, if not laid us open to ruin, by our grasping to retain too much, the former of which has been, I think, undeniably the case of Spain, with respect to her extensive American possessions. It appears also great cause of thankfulness, that our German brethren and allies, for whom we have had so great and just a concern, are delivered from their grievous distresses; Portugal protected; our American plantations freed from the cruelties of savages, and our colonies greatly extended and strengthened, in consequence of our enemies being so far subdued or removed to a distance; and peace restored to all the nations of Europe. These things may appear little to those whose hearts were elevated with conquests, and big with extravagant imaginations; but surely they ought not to appear so to the friends of mankind, and those to whom the thought of the effusion of much human blood is painful. And supposing that

that more advantageous terms might have been obtained, it is certain that no human measures can be ever expected to be absolutely perfect; and it would be highly absurd and guilty, not to be thankful for great advantages, because perhaps greater were possible.

While therefore we give thanks for the peace to the God of Peace, it concerns us also to pray for the continuance of it; that there may be no more such dreadful calamities for many years to come, and that the nations, instead of devouring one another, may learn to study each other's mutual advantage, as it becomes mankind to do, and as our holy religion would certainly teach us to do, if it had its own genuine influence on the minds of men in general.

4. 'Tis a further evident duty to give thanks, and pray for the continuance of peace among ourselves.

'Tis melancholy to hear of multitudes of mankind in arms against each other, though in distant parts of the earth; but it would be much more terrible to us if it were so among ourselves, if we were invaded by foreign enemies, or rebellion, insurrections, and civil wars were raging at home. It is an instance of the great goodness of God, that it has not been so in any part of the late war, as it

was during the foregoing war : and though it is lamentable to think, that as soon as we have peace abroad, we should have so much murmuring and discontent at home, so many bitter things said and wrote against fellow-subjects, in which Royal Majesty itself scarce escapes from bearing its part ; yet still it is cause of much thankfulness, that the turbulent spirits of men are so far restrained, as not to break out into open violence, and that in consequence of peace abroad, and peace, at least so far, at home, we have opportunity to lead quiet and peaceable lives. And it is manifestly our duty to pray for the continuance of it, that God would cause the *wrath of man to praise him*, to refer to Psalm lxxvi. 10 *and that the remainder of wrath he would restrain* ; that the inhabitants of this land may learn to improve the blessings of peace, to fear God, and honour the King, to know their own true interests, seek each other's welfare, and unite under the government of *the Prince of Peace**.

5. We are further bound to lead a quiet and peaceable life, while we have such advantages for it.

When we are commanded to give thanks and pray for kings, and all that are in authority, that

* I. ai. ix. 6.

we may lead such a life, it manifestly implies an obligation upon us to endeavour to do it: Otherwise our prayers and thanksgivings would be but a solemn mockery of God. 'Tis our duty, therefore, to lead a quiet and peaceable life with respect to the Government with which we are favoured, and the public measures it pursues. I cannot help fearing, that there is much guilt contracted before God, by the inhabitants of this land, and even by many professing godliness, by their murmuring and repining disposition against the measures of the Government; great multitudes in effect setting up themselves for guides and judges in affairs which God has not committed to their management; and I the rather chose upon this occasion a subject which should lead to a sense of the evil of such things, that I might the more particularly warn you to be obedient to the Divine orders, Rom. xiii. 1. *Let every soul be subject to the higher powers*; and Acts xxiii. 5. *Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people*. 'Tis a terrible case which is represented, Isai. viii. 21. *And it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry they shall fret themselves, and curse their King, and their God, and look upwards*: If this conduct was guilty and abominable in those that were hungry, how much more so must it be in us who are full,

and

and abound in all the blessings that plenty, peace, and liberty can afford. Let me further add, to enforce this, the example of our brethren the French Protestants, who amidst all the hardships they have endured, always speak, if I am rightly informed, with the utmost respect, of their Monarch, and can scarce bear to hear any thing said reflecting upon him. What then must be the guilt of Britons, who are so much more highly favoured, if they eagerly receive every slander that malice can invent, and indulge themselves in scurrilous invectives against the best of Governments! How astonishing must it appear to our foreign brethren among us, and how strange the report of it to those at a distance! Is this liberty? Or rather, is not liberty really endangered by such a conduct? The great obligations we in this place are under to his Majesty for his bounty to us, under our late grievous calamity, will, I hope, effectually preserve us from making so unworthy a return: And it is with pleasure I observe so little reason to be apprehensive of it. Let us therefore conscientiously guard against all indecent and ungrateful reflections upon the gracious Government under which God has placed us, and by which we enjoy so much mercy; remembering that admirable direction of divine wisdom, 1 Pet. ii. 16. as free, and

not

not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. If attempts were made to shackle our consciences, it would become us to shew that we understood these to be subject to God alone, that we were determined as his servants to obey him rather than men, and that we must and would be free in this respect, what ever it cost us : but when there is no appearance of the least design; to invade either our sacred or civil liberty ; it is certainly most unworthy of the character of the servants of God, to abuse that venerable name, as a cloak of licentiousness and malignity.

'Tis further a manifest part of our duty, to lead a quiet and peaceable life, with respect to those around us ; to give no unnecessary offence to any, and not to be ready to take the offence that others may give us ; to forbear all such words and actions as tend to exasperate the passions of, those around us ; and according to the divine command, Rom. xiii. 17—21. *To recompence to no man evil for evil ; if it be possible, as much as lieth in us to live peaceably with all men ; not to avenge ourselves, but rather give place to wrath : For it is written, Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord : If our enemy hunger, to feed him ; and if he thirst, to give him drink ; for in so doing we shall heap coals of fire upon*

upon his head , and not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

6. We are further indispensably bound to live in all godliness.

As our interest for the present life, as well as our duty to God, requires us to lead a quiet and peaceable life : 'Tis possible, and undoubtedly often the case in fact, that this consideration, and the love of ease, and want of courage, may induce persons to lead such a life, who have no sense of their duty to God, nor regard to his commandments in it; though this therefore is incumbent upon all that profess religion, yet let us remember that there is yet much more than is necessary; a holy fear of God, and filial love to his blessed Majesty, with all its proper fruits; this is indispensably necessary in every circumstance, but public peace and tranquility gives us an advantage for it, far beyond what they can have, whose minds are disquieted with dreadful apprehensions from their enemies, or distressed with their cruelties and oppressions; 'tis represented as highly advantageous in this view, in the words of Zacharias, Luke i. 74, 75, *That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.* And though peace at
home

home has afforded us this advantage in a great measure while war was raging abroad, yet the establishment of public tranquility adds to the advantage, and consequently to the obligation, as it quiets the apprehensions that timorous minds might be ready to entertain while the war continued.

Diligence in attending the public worship of God, is one part of the filial duty and gratitude we owe to the God of peace. The worshipping assemblies of our American brethren in the back settlements, were broken up, and themselves either destroyed or scattered like sheep by wolves; though there is reason to hope many of them were such as panted after the ordinances of God: How inexcusable then must those be in this land of peace, who unnecessarily neglect an attendance upon divine ordinances! and how inexcusable the careless worshipper, that attends out of custom and form, and hears as if he heard not! The families of many of our American brethren, and perhaps those of our German brethren, were broken up too, as well as their worshipping assemblies; perhaps some where the worship of God had been maintained, to the shame of many peaceful families in England, where it is neglected. If judgment begin at the house of God, to refer to 1 Pet. iv. 17. what shall the end of them be that obey not the Gospel of God? and
how

how much reason will those families among us have to expect, that God should some way or other ** pour out his fury upon them* who yet obstinately neglect to *call upon his name*? The religious education of our children, is another part of the duty, for which we have special advantage in the peacefulness of our land, and the liberty we enjoy; 'tis not easy to conceive to the full, though a general idea may be easily formed, how great an interruption must be given to this important duty, so necessary to the real happiness of families, and of the world in general, where war spreads its horrid ravages; where so many children must be left orphans, so many families scattered, or driven from place to place for safety, or kept in continual alarms and disquietude, and filled with overwhelming distress, on account of the oppressions they endure. We cannot forget the attack made upon this precious branch of liberty, at the close of a late reign, when the education of the children of Protestant Dissenters was intended to be no longer left to the option of the parents, or to the direction of such persons to whom they would have chosen to intrust it, but to be thrown into hands with which they could by no means be satisfied.

* Jer. x. 25.

If then amidst our present advantages, we neglect to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, while they continue in our own houses, or are careless about their religious advantages, in the stations in which we place them, when we find it necessary to remove them into other families; how shall we answer for so important an injury to the public, to the interests of religion in the world, and to the souls of our children in particular? And what account shall we give to the Father of Spirits, that has committed their souls as well as their bodies to our care? If the written word of God is neglected, or if we presume to live in disobedience to it, to gratify our lusts, and walk in the sight of our eyes, and the imagination of our own hearts; or if we live in forgetfulness of the Majesty of Heaven, and the great concerns we have with him; if * *God is not in all our thoughts*, and we remain estranged from him in the inward disposition of our minds, or even if we content ourselves with weak and languid love and duty to him, amidst the mighty obligations we are under to love him with the utmost fervency, how inexcusable shall we be!—Once more,

7. We are alike indispensably bound to live in all honesty.

* Psal, x. 4.

Our duty to our fellow-creatures, though by no means the whole of our duty, is an essential part of it, and such as cannot be neglected without great offence to the blessed God, danger to our souls, and dishonour to religion. The same authority that requires us, * *to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind*, requires us also *to love our neighbour as ourselves*; and † *to do to others whatsoever we would that they should do to us*, which includes the whole of our duty to them, and particularly the utmost regard to justice and truth in all our concerns with them, which we certainly desire they should maintain to us.

The law of God descends into particulars, and requires the faithful payment of what is due to the Government; ‡ *Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's; render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*. It commands *masters to give their servants that which is just and equal, not to oppress them, nor even to delay the payment of their*

* Matth. xxii. 37—39.

† Matth. vii. 12.

‡ Matth. xxii. 21. Rom. xiii. 7. 2 Col. iv. 1. Deut. xxiv. 14, 15.

wages, and on the other hand it commandeth servants not to * *purloin*, or secrete their master's goods, but to *shew all good fidelity*. It forbids mutual oppression betwixt the buyer and seller, and enjoins us, † *not to go beyond or defraud our brother in any matter*, solemnly warning us to ‡ *put away lying and to speak every man the truth with his neighbour, because we are members one of another*: And it inforces these, and all its other injunctions, by the consideration of the notice that the blessed God takes of us, and the account to which he will shortly call us.

A disregard therefore to this great branch of our duty, cannot but be highly injurious to our own souls, a fatal symptom of the insincerity of our hearts towards God, and where it is attended with a profession of religion, it reflects the utmost dishonour upon religion itself, strengthens the prejudices of sinners against it, hardens and emboldens them in their wickedness, tends to seduce the young and unexperienced to the practice of the same evils, and cannot but greatly grieve those that fear God in truth.

The blessings of peace and liberty afford us every advantage for the practice of integrity and upright-

* Tit. ii. 10. † 1 Thess. iv. 6. ‡ Eph. xxiv. 5.

ness to those around us. We are not exposed to the violence and oppression, which abounds in a state of war or persecution, and are freed from the temptation to practise it towards others, to which want and distress exposes those who suffer it. And the advantage which we have for the practice of social duties certainly strengthens the obligation upon us, to maintain the most conscientious regard to them. While we are free from injury and oppression, how inexcusable shall we be if we injure and oppress one another, or fail in our regard to those mutual duties, which are so great a part of our duty to the blessed God, and so needful to the honour of religion, and to the happiness of mankind !

I conclude this discourse with these two additional exhortations: let us take heed of overlooking any of God's commandments—And let our prayers and thanksgivings, upon all occasions, be offered in the name of the great Mediator betwixt God and man.

1. Let us take heed of overlooking any of God's commandments.

An universal regard to them is the great distinguishing character of his servants. If we confine our views to the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures, we may indeed obtain a reputation among them,
but

but shall at the same time be chargeable with living *without God in the world**: And if, on the other hand, amidst the strictest profession of regard to the duties we owe to his blessed Majesty, we neglect our duty to man, we shall highly dishonour that holy name by which we are called, and have reason to fear lest we should be numbered at last among those, who though they had said, *Lord, Lord, yet shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven*† and to whom Christ will pronounce, *I never knew you: Depart from me ye that work iniquity.*

Let us take heed then of being seduced by the clamours of artful and designing men, into the least degrees of disrespect to the best of Princes; remembering him that has said, *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*‡. Let us be mindful of the honour due to all that are in authority, and be cautious in joining in virulent reflections upon them. Let us remember, that it is the duty not only of Christian Ministers in their public ministrations, but of all the followers of Christ, in their domestic and secret devotions, to give thanks for public tranquility and peace, and to pray for kings and those in authority: How powerful a motive is it which the Apostle urges to enforce it, in the

* Eph. ii. 12. † Matth. vii. 21—23. ‡ Exod. xxiii. 2.

words immediately following the text, *For this is good and acceptable in the Sight of God our Saviour!* What weight must this consideration have with all that desire to approve themselves to God? And let me add, we must be manifestly self-condemned if we censure the public measures, while we neglect to pray for divine direction for those to whose management they are intrusted. In private life, let us be ever mindful that we profess ourselves to be the followers of him who bears the united characters of the * *Prince of Peace*, and the *Holy One and the Just*; and are therefore under the highest obligation diligently to imitate him in both respects.

2. Let our prayers and thanksgivings upon all occasions, be offered in the name of the great Mediator betwixt God and Man.

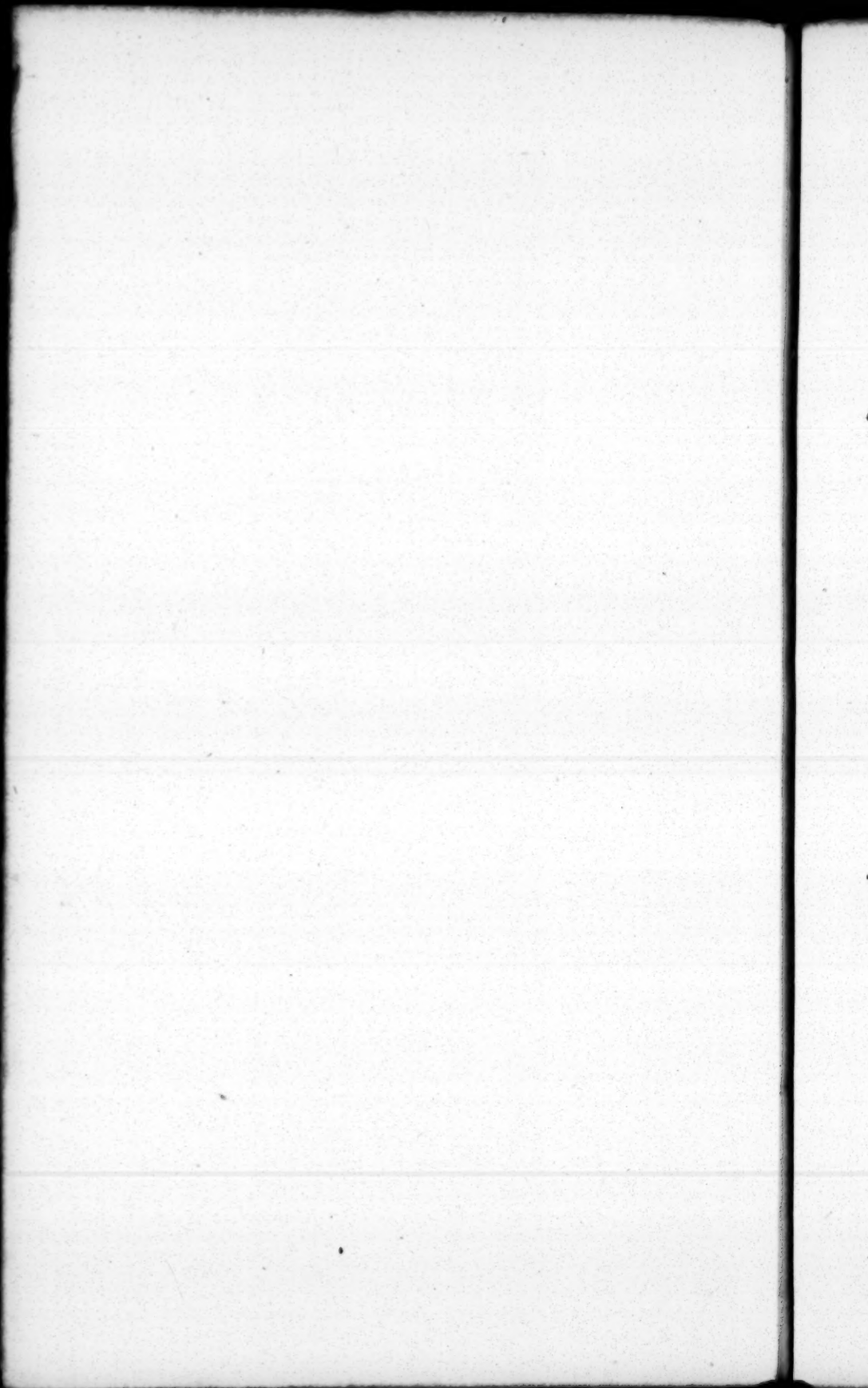
The Lord Jesus Christ is so eminently the great theme of the Gospel, that the sacred writers mingle the obligations we are under to him, and the dependance we have upon him, with every subject they treat of, and draw from thence motives to inforce every duty they inculcate. We have an instance of it in the 5th verse of the chapter before us, *For there is one God, and one Mediator betwixt*

* Isa. ix. 6. Acts. iii. 14.

God and men, the man Christ Jesus. The Gospel teaches and commands us, * *Whatsoever we do in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him; to come to God by him; and to ask what we ask of the Father in his name; and to look for acceptance only through the beloved.* Let that infinitely exalted and amiable name Jesus our Lord, dwell continually on our hearts, regulate our temper and conduct, animate our praises, and encourage our prayers, both for public and private, for temporal and spiritual mercies, and we shall have abundant reason cheerfully to expect, in virtue of his atoning sacrifice and continued mediation, a constant succession of such mercies as the wisdom of God sees to be best for us in the present life, and a place in that glorious world at last where † *his mercy, in the strictest sense, endures for ever.*

* Col. iii. 17. Heb. vii. 25. John xvi. 23.

† Psal. cxxxvi. *passim.*



*The Necessity of immediate Attention to
the Calls of God,*

REPRESENTED IN

A S E R M O N,

PREACHED ON

New-Year's-Day, 1766,

AT

WAREHAM, in DORSETSHIRE.

By S. READER.

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THE PREFACE.

AS the following plain discourse has nothing further to recommend it, than what it derives from the subject itself; I have no other apology to make for offering it to the Public, so soon after my sermons on the parable of the ten virgins, to some of which it bears so near a resemblance, but that which occasioned their publication, viz. the desire of several that heard it, and a sincere concern, as far as I am capable of judging of myself, to serve the everlasting interests of the souls of men. And as a single sermon may probably come into the hands of some, who have not opportunity or inclination to read a volume; so if serious impressions have been made upon the minds of any by those discourses, such persons will scarce be displeased to see the following.

As the propensity of mankind to neglect the great work of religion, or, which amounts to the same, to defer it to some uncertain future period, is too manifest to be denied: it is evidently the prudence of those that are employed in the service of the sanctuary, besides insisting in their stated ministrations, on that glorious variety of engagements and encouragements to it which the Gospel furnishes, drawn from the authority of the blessed God, the abundance of his mercy, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the aids of his blessed Spi-

rit, the worth of the soul, and the solemnity of the world and judgment to come ; to make use of every incident ; to awaken the regards of mankind to it. And as the entrance of a new year is naturally adapted to lead men to a review of the time that is past, and to some serious reflections on the uncertainty of the events of that which is to come ; so it has long been the custom in many congregations, and particularly in that to which I minister, to devote an hour or two to public worship on such occasions : and though various themes may then offer themselves to our attention, yet the value of time, the danger of delays in religion, and the necessity of immediate and constant regards to it, are so natural, that they can scarce be omitted. Upon these things therefore, I have particularly insisted in the following discourse, which, as the subject is always equally important, may, I hope, be read with advantage at any other time, than at the beginning of a year : and if it may be the happy means, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, of engaging any, truly and immediately to attend to *the one thing needful* *, an end will be answered, which will afford the most delightful reflections both to them and me.

* Luke x. 42.

A S E R M O N,

Ec. Ec. Ec.

Heb. iv. 7.

Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time;—

THROUGH *the tender mercy of our God**, our lives have been continued to the close of one year more, which has conveyed to the grave many who entered upon it, with as reasonable a prospect of seeing the return of such a day as this, as we had; but they now sleep in the mansions of the dead, and their immortal spirits are entered upon an eternal and unchangeable state, either of happiness or misery, according to their respective characters; while we are yet the living monuments of divine goodness, and still favoured with the means of grace, and of *obtaining salvation by our*

* Luke i. 78.

Lord Jesus Christ *. We enter upon another year, the dying year of some among us, as there is the utmost reason to believe, and as all our foregoing years have been to others; and we cannot but universally acknowledge our absolute uncertainty, whether it may not be to ourselves the year of our removal from time to eternity, of giving up our account to *God the judge of all* †, and being unalterably fixed by the sentence of his justice or his grace. What an engagement ought this to be, and how loud and solemn a call is it to an immediate attention and diligent obedience to the voice of God! who of us then will be concerned to hear, as those that are preparing to stand before his great tribunal, and that know not but that we are just upon the point of doing it?

The Apostle, in this and the foregoing chapter, makes an awakening use of a quotation from *Psalms* xcv. 7—11. *To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said it is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways. Unto whom I swear in*

* 1 Thess. v. 9.

† Heb. xii. 23.

my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest. A passage so exceeding solemn and important, that the Apostle returns to it again and again, so much the more deeply to impress it upon our minds, and dwells upon it with a force of argument and pathos of address, which one would think should make its way into every heart, and never be forgotten, did not the corruption of human nature furnish a thousand proofs, both in ourselves and others, of the degree in which it is so.

The Holy Ghost * in the manner in which he expressed the warning that he gave by the *Psalmist* to the generation then living, and all that should succeed, founded upon the exclusion of those Israelites from Canaan, who came out of Egypt, plainly intimated, that there was another rest, into which they also had a prospect of entering, but from which there was danger of their being shut out, by the same means which had prevented the entrance of their fathers into the promised land: but as there were two other kinds of rest familiar to the thoughts of the Hebrews or Jews, to whom the Apostle wrote; the rest of the sabbath, in commemoration of God's having *rested from his works on the seventh day*, and the rest of Israel in the land of

* Heb. iii. 7.

Canaan ; it could not be, as he argues, either of these ; because the former had been instituted *from the foundation of the world*, and Israel had been long in possession of the latter, in the days of David. Since then the warning itself implied, that some should enter into that further rest to which the Psalmist referred, and they to whom the good news of rest in Canaan first came, were debarred from that by their unbelief and disobedience ; from thence it appears who they are that shall enter into the furthest rest to be expected, viz. the believing and obedient : and that the same causes that hindered that ancient generation from entering into Canaan, would equally hinder the entrance of others into this better rest, since the method of the conduct of God would be nearly the same to both. To guard, therefore, succeeding generations against those evils, the blessed God again limits a certain day to them, as he had in effect before done to the Israelites with respect to their entrance into Canaan, their proposal on the morrow to enter, being absolutely rejected, Numb. xiv. 40—43. And he names, or speaks of, * *to-day*, as that certain

* This sense of the verb *λεγω* is, I think sufficiently supported by its use in the following passages among others. Matt. ii. 23. iv. 18. John vi. 71. viii. 27. 1 Cor. x. 29. xii. 3.

limited day. as it is said to-day, if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts. This view of the foregoing verses appears to me to set the whole of the Apostle's argument in an easy and natural light, as well as to take off the appearance of a tautology in the expressions, saying in David, to-day, as it is said.

The order of the original words renders it probable, that the clause, *After so long a time*, immediately refers to the length of time that had passed in the days of David, both from the institution of the sabbath, and the entrance of Israel into Canaan; yet perhaps it might be intended, as a further consideration to enforce an immediate regard to the voice of God: at least, it may not be improperly improved as such, and this use I shall make of it, in what I am about to offer. In this view two striking considerations are pointed out in these words, as implied in this solemn call, and especially in the two first words of it, *To-day*; the length of time already passed, and the limitation of a certain day for our hearkening to the voice of God; each of which I propose, by divine assistance, particularly to consider.

Let us then,

I. Consider the length of time already passed.

To-day after so long a time; which we may thus paraphrase: After so long a time of the calls of

God—of total or partial disregard of his voice—and of divine patience and mercy notwithstanding that disregard.

1st. We are required to hearken to the voice of God to-day, after so long a time of his continued calls.

The great Sovereign of the world, whose first and single call would most reasonably claim all the attention of heaven and of earth, and whose wrath might justly burn against any creature that should presume to turn a deaf ear, though he spake but once; yet condescends to call us often, in various ways, and for a long continuance of time. He calls us by his word, and in this respect favours us above a great part of mankind. We may apply with a small variation to ourselves, what is said, Psal. cxlvii. 20. and though we rejoice that we cannot say, as the Psalmist might to Israel, *he hath not dealt so with any nation*, we may truly say, he hath not dealt so with every, nor with many nations: *and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.* How small a part of mankind at present, and how few ages have been favoured with advantages equal to ours, and such abundant opportunities of hearing and reading the word of God without persecution or danger. The inestimable privilege has been continued long; the
days

days of liberty, and of the peaceful enjoyment of the gospel of Christ, have been many: so long, so uninterrupted a season of tranquility has been before unknown in these nations, and seldom known in others: we have been brought up amidst the blessings and comforts of it; and the glorious light of the gospel has not only long shone in our land, but many of us have sprung from such families, and been situated in such places, where we have in fact enjoyed its holy beams with the greatest advantage from our earliest childhood. After so long a time, the Majesty of heaven may surely, with the highest reason demand, that we should hear his voice to-day, without a moment's further neglect.

He has sent to us one of his servants after another, *rising early and sending them*, as it is emphatically expressed, Jer. xlv. 4. When some have been removed, he has raised up others to supply their place, and *stirred up the spirit* * of ministers, of parents, or Christian friends, in many instances affectionately to address us in private, and endeavour by every consideration to lead us to attention and obedience to the voice of God.

He has called us by a variety of providences. How numerous are the mercies we have received,

* Ezra i. 1.

and for how long a time! Who of us must not say with the Psalmist, Psal. cxxxix. 17, 18. *How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand.* And each of these mercies had a kind of divine eloquence in it, to engage us to hearken to the calls of the word of God. We have had also our afflictions, warnings of our frailty, and of the speedy approach of our dissolution. Most of us have, at one time or other, lain upon a bed of languishing; or been exposed to such accidents, as would have laid us in the silent dust, had not God been gracious to us; nor is the time so long since these events, to some of us, that they should yet be forgotten. We have seen in every past year of our life, many of our friends and neighbours conveyed to the tomb; and amongst others some that were very dear to us, and from whom the separation has been extremely painful. This train of divine providence, and of the calls of God by them, has been continued for a long time; to the young, ten or twenty years; to the old, yet much more. To-day, therefore, after so long a time, if you ever mean to hearken to the voice of God at all, harden not your hearts.

To these calls of the word, servants, and providences of God, have been added those of his Spirit.

rit How many of us have long had at times such inward checks for sin, such views of the infinite importance of eternal things, such a sense of danger, and such fears of divine wrath in some instances; and in others, such pleasing hopes of pardon, and of an interest in the love of God, as must render every moment's delay of hearkening further to his voice, utterly inexcusable. And these impressions of one kind or other, have been to some of us repeated so often, and for so long a time, that the blessed God may now well limit a certain day, and require us to hearken to him immediately. It is greatly to be lamented that there should be so much reason to add,

2dly. We are called to hearken to the voice of God to-day, after so long a time of total or partial disregard of it.

Total in sinners, and partial even in God's own servants. Amidst these various, numerous, and long continued calls of God, how many have remained totally deaf and regardless, and as careless about the things of God, and the welfare of their souls as ever. They hear the word of God, but it is as if they had no concern in it: they do so from the beginning of the year to the end of it, one year after another, from youth to middle age, and some even till *gray hairs* are not only *here and there*, but
every

every where *upon them* *. The servants of God often attempt to rouse them: they *cry aloud and spare not* †; they labour from time to time in public, or private, or both, and would not willingly leave any method untaken, to awaken those that are sleeping upon the verge of the bottomless pit. And yet are not there those among you who have been long utterly unmindful of their voice, or if sometimes startled, have composed yourselves again to sleep, and even shunned further means of conviction, though that conviction is highly needful, and would greatly conduce to your eternal salvation? Think, my friends, what sort of hearers of the word of God many of you have been; how sleepy some of you! how thoughtless and inattentive others! how little have you often known, as soon as you have left the ordinances of God, of what you have heard! how soon has that little been forgotten, and how absolutely destitute of any effect to bring you to God! what are you the better for hearing the word of God these twenty, thirty, or forty years, or more? Reflect as far as you can, what you were so long ago; compare it with what you now are, and say, if there is any real difference, except what is occasioned by your years,

* Hos. vii. 9.

† Isa. lviii. 1.

or your different circumstances or relations in life. Is there any evidence of your having experienced a work of converting grace, any mortification of sin, any converse with God and heaven begun and carrying on? Or, are you yet upon the whole the same, except perhaps some such circumstantial difference as has just been mentioned? Say further, whether some of you are not really, certainly, dreadfully worse than you were formerly; indulging yourselves in those sins, or neglecting those duties which you durst not some years ago. Do not some of you often neglect the ordinances of God, who were once constant in your attendance upon them? Do not others now live without prayer, whom the principles of education, and the sensibility of conscience, would not suffer to do it in earlier life? Are there not drunkards, who a few years ago were temperate? Sabbath-breakers, that were once afraid of mis-spending that sacred time? And persons that profane the name of God, who had some reverence for it in their youth?

O think, unhappy creatures, that are yet in your sins, to what a length your rebellions against God have been carried, and what a life of disobedience you have lived. Can you reckon up the multitudes of your sins, or number your transgressions? Can you count the instances in which
you

you have grieved and quenched the spirit of God, and turned a deaf ear to his voice? Yet all these stand upon record; they are all written in his book, to be laid open at the approaching day of your appearance before him. And what a day of amazement and terror must that be, if you yet refuse to hearken to his voice, to flee to the refuge of the cross of Christ, and bow to the sceptre of his kingdom! that awful day is near, you have not now that length of time to expect, with which you flattered yourselves in your early years, and with which you have been hitherto indulged, but have so unhappily abused. It hastens to its period; every year, every day, every hour brings it forwards by swift advances. How many have been continually falling into the dust about you on every side, and yet you have continued deaf to that voice, which thereby in effect repeated and enforced our Lord's order, Matt. xxiv. 44. *Therefore be ye also ready.*

To you it may be said with the utmost propriety, as the prophet was ordered to say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Ezek. xliv. 6. *Thus saith the Lord God, O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you all of your abominations.* Or in words akin to those of the Apostle, 1 Pet. iv. 3. *The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts,*
excess.

excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries. Let the time past indeed suffice you, O sinners, and now after so long a time hearken to the voice of God, awful yet gracious, warning you of your immense danger, yet inviting you to accept the richest blessings.

And to those of us, who *through grace* * have not been totally deaf to the voice of God, he also calls to-day after so long a time, in which we have heard but in part, and obeyed in so poor and interrupted a manner, and so little answerable to our profession, our covenant-engagements, our experiences, and our hopes to-day after so long a time of negligence, formality, and indifference in his service, the Majesty of heaven calls us more attentively to hear, and more diligently to obey his voice.

3dly. The blessed God commands us to hearken to his voice to-day, after so long a time of his patience and mercy, notwithstanding our deafness to his calls.

The provocations that we have offered to his glorious Majesty by our former inattention and disobedience, have been indeed great; yours especially, O sinners, how exceeding great! and how

* Acts xviii. 27.

justly might he have consumed you by the terrors of his almighty wrath long ago ! and even those of us that have not been wholly deaf to his voice, yet have been so to such a degree, that he might justly have taken his holy Spirit from us ; and we have reason to subscribe to the prophet's humble acknowledgment, Lam. iii. 22. *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.* To what an astonishing length has the patience and forbearance of God to creatures so sinful and unworthy, been continued, and how truly wonderful is it, that it should endure towards us so many years, and amidst so many offences, whilst so many others have been called to an earlier account ! But it is still a much further cause of astonishment, that during all this time, and this inattention to his voice, he has been daily loading us with benefits too numerous to be reckoned up, and too valuable to be estimated. What a contrast does the patience and goodness of God, on the one hand, and our sinfulness on the other, form ! how much have we resembled the barren fig-tree in our Lord's parable, Luke xiii. 6—9. Our great Lord has come not *three years* only, but many more, *seeking fruit* ; in some *finding none* at all, in others, much less than might have been reasonably expected ; and yet his patience has borne with us to
this

this day; still is he graciously pleased to afford us various means and mercies, and has been doing so for many years: but he sets us a day after so long a time, and commands us all to hear his voice to-day; those of us to begin truly to do it, who have yet never done it, and those to do it with much greater attention, who have already done it in part. But this leads me,

II. To offer some observations on the limitation of a certain day, for hearing the voice of God, as a forcible engagement to do it immediately.

He does not leave us at liberty to hear his voice whenever we may think proper, or to choose our own time for doing it, as the delaying sinner presumes to do; but he himself fixes the time in which he will be heard, if we desire to have any assurance of his speaking peace and pardon to us, and expressly requires it to be done to-day. Thus the Lord Jesus condescends to reason with us, concerning the account to be given at last of the improvement of our talents, from the conduct that men observe to each other, Luke xii. 48. *Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* So in the present case, we may in like manner observe, as men in several instances fix a time to others, for doing what they
require

require of them ; if they desire to reap any advantage from it, or to escape such tokens of their displeasure with which they are threatened ; as in the case of the payment of debts, the surrender of besieged places, the submission of rebels to their prince, and on other occasions: so the great Lord of all, with an authority to which he has the most righteous and undeniable claim, fixes a time for the submission of his rebellious creatures, if they would reap any assured benefits from the offers of pardoning grace, with which his word abounds. He is ready to forgive the worst offenders, that humble themselves at the footstool of his throne, and it is his wonderful grace that he is ; but he absolutely requires that it should be done, that very day, when his call is proclaimed in their ears. And I would with all possible earnestness press this part of the divine command, and entreat every one of you, if you love your souls, and desire eternal happiness, to hearken to the voice of God without any further delay : for God neither has given, nor will give you any assurance of a longer continuance of life—of further means of grace—or of pardon and salvation, if not accepted to-day. He does not indeed bind himself not to grant any of these beyond the present day ; perhaps he may do it, but to some he will not, nor will he promise it
to

to any ; and therefore, it must be the extremity of folly, when heaven and hell are depending, to venture upon an uncertain futurity beyond even the present hour. Observe then,

1st. God gives you no assurance of the continuance of life any longer.

In his hand our breath is, and his are all our ways *. The Sovereign of life reserves the disposal of it to himself, and wholly conceals from his creatures the time when he will call for it. But amidst the multitudes of mankind, I may venture to say with undoubted certainty, that there is not a single day that passes, without the entrance of many upon an eternal world. I might even add, not one hour, or minute, without it. To-morrow, and even this very day, must be, without a doubt, the day of death, and judgment to multitudes ; the day when many, in one place or other, must enter upon the invisible world, and be irreversibly fixed for eternity ; but it is a secret in the breast of infinite wisdom who they are, or where they dwell : perhaps the places we inhabit are the places, and we ourselves the persons. Some or other of us, we have the utmost reason to believe, must be called into eternity before another year is

* Dan. v. 23.

expired ; but who they shall be, or in what month, or day of it, we know not. Perhaps this very month, and one of the next succeeding days of it, may be the time prefixed by the divine counsels for this purpose ; and if we do not hearken to the voice of God to-day, we may have no opportunity of doing it hereafter, but may be summoned without delay, to appear before his great tribunal, to give an account of our obstinacy and folly. Probably we have at present no symptoms upon us of death at hand ; we are well, and seem to have a prospect of the continuance of life, for months or years to come : but how often have we known instances of persons, who were in health, and in the grave, within the compass of one week ! how often have we heard of, and perhaps known those who have passed from the most promising prospect of a long continuance of life, into an everlasting world, by some sudden disease or accident, in an hour, or even a minute ! and, is there a person among us so presumptuous, as to venture to assure himself, that it will not be his own case ? Most of us probably hope that it will not, but it has been so frequently to others ; and should it be so to ourselves, how deplorable, how miserable must our case be, if we have not truly hearkened to the voice of God ! and even to the Christian himself, how alarming,

if

if he has any warning at all, and at the same time conscience charges upon him, much want of attention to the calls of his heavenly Father!

This is a consideration on which our Lord often insists, particularly Mark xiii. 35—57. *Watch ye therefore (for ye know not when the master of the house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning) lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch. And again, Luke xii. 35—40. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good-man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore also ready: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Though therefore our great Lord does not fix the day of his coming, he limits*

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a certain

a certain day for us to hear his voice, if we would be assured of doing it at all to our comfort, and absolutely requires us to do it this very day, when this call sounds in our ears.

2dly. God gives you no assurance of the continuance of the means of grace any longer.

It is possible that life may be continued, and yet all advantages for our souls cease ; nor is the case an unusual one. How often has it occurred under the violence of persecution, and they, who in a day of liberty were inattentive to the voice of God, like many among us, have been deprived of the opportunity of attending his ordinances, by cruel and unrighteous edicts. We in this place, had an alarming proof betwixt three and four years ago, how easily an offended God could have deprived us of our seasons of worship, by giving up the place of it to devouring flames. And besides such general calamities, in which many are involved at once, there are other methods of a more private nature, by which a holy God, displeased with our delays, might easily strip us of the advantage of his word or worship : blindness may render us incapable of reading, or deafness of hearing the former ; such weakness may seize us as might absolutely confine us from attending the latter ; or diseases so painful, or sorrows so severe, might come upon us, as would
render

render us unable to attend to any thing but the pressure under which we groaned. Such, and yet more numerous, are the methods by which the blessed God might take from us the advantage of the means of grace, while life itself is continued. On account therefore both of the uncertainty of life, and of the conduct of divine providence towards us, we know not at any time when we attend the public ordinances of divine worship, whether we hear not the last sermon that we shall ever hear, or attend the last of our sacred solemnities; and as we cannot have any certainty of the contrary, it is of the utmost importance to hearken to and obey the voice of God without further delay.

3dly, The blessed God gives us no assurance of pardon and salvation, if not accepted to-day.

It is mercy truly admirable, that he has given to creatures so rebellious as the sons and daughters of Adam, so many gracious invitations to accept eternal salvation, and so many assurances of his readiness to bestow it, upon all that are cordially willing to embrace it; and it is a glorious addition to the riches of his grace, that he is yet ready to grant it, after it has been neglected for so long a time. But that solemn declaration with respect to the old world, still remains in its full force, as an admonition to all future ages, Gen. vi. 3. *My spi-*

rit shall not always strive with man. And if we continue to turn a deaf ear to its voice, we have the utmost reason to fear, lest having been often *grieved**, it should be utterly withdrawn, and that tremendous sentence passed upon us, Rev. xxii. 11. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.* Should we provoke the Lord to denounce such a curse upon us, and in consequence of it, to deny his blessings to his ordinances, and give us up to the temptations of Satan, and to the hardness and impenitence of our own hearts; the continuance of life and of the means of grace would not profit us, but on the contrary, only afford an unhappy opportunity of so much the more filling up our iniquities, and aggravating our future condemnation. And the immoveable insensibility of many sinners, under every method that can be used to awaken them, affords much cause to fear that such a case as this, dreadful as it is, is not an unusual one.

When, therefore, the Spirit of God breathes upon our souls by means of his word, or his providence, convinces of sin, alarms us with a sense of the necessity of *fleeing from the wrath to come*, or excites us to our duty; if we refuse to give atten-

* Eph. iv. 30.

tion to his voice, perhaps it is the last time that we shall receive such impressions, and from that unhappy day the blessed God may say concerning us as concerning Ephraim, *Hos. iv. 17. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone.* He limits a certain day, and requires us, therefore, to hearken to his voice to-day, lest he should henceforth refuse to call any longer.

Having thus pointed out such things as may be reasonably supposed to be implied in the limitation of a certain day, I shall only further attempt to lead every one to the proper improvement of what has been offered, in such exhortations as these. Let delaying sinners seriously consider the greatness of their guilt and danger—let awakened sinners be engaged and encouraged, immediately to accept the offers of pardon and salvation that are made in the Gospel—and let each of us seriously consider in what respects the blessed God calls us to hearken to his voice to-day.

I. Let delaying sinners seriously consider the greatness of their guilt and danger.

Reflect, I beseech you, upon the guilt you have already contracted, by delaying an attention to the calls of God, and abusing his patience and goodness thus far. Has it not been already long enough? And is it not shameful and horrible, to
reflect

reflect on the length of time you have been regardless of the voice of him that made and preserved you, and bestowed such innumerable favours upon you, notwithstanding your continued disobedience? And if you have any degree of ingenuous shame remaining, surely it must pain you in every thoughtful moment, to look back upon so many years of life, of attendance on the gospel of Christ, and of convictions sometimes awakened, and reflect, “notwithstanding all this, I have never yet
 “given any serious and lasting attention to the
 “voice of God, but returned, after my most
 “alarming thoughts, to my former carelessness of
 “my everlasting safety, and persisted in the same
 “course of life as before.” Every day your further delay, adds to the load of your guilt, already great beyond account; and this day in particular will add to it even more than others, while you hear so positive an order from heaven, to attend to the voice of God to-day, if you yet continue to disobey it: and in proportion to this addition to your guilt, you increase your danger, both with respect to the terrors of your future sentence, and the speed with which the execution of it may be expected: you run the most dreadful risk, either of your being cut short, of being deprived of your present advantages, or of being given up to the utmost hardness and insensibility.

insensibility. And shall not all these things rouse you to an immediate attention to the voice of God?

2dly. Let convinced and awakened sinners be engaged and encouraged, immediately to accept the offers of pardon and salvation that are made in the Gospel.

To-day, after so long a time, in which your Almighty Sovereign has been calling to you without effect, he condescends to repeat the gracious proposals of his mercy through his Son: and *the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering,** towards you hitherto, as well as the ample declarations of his word, afford most abundant evidence, how ready he is to accept your submission, and to bestow the blessings of his love. You cannot entertain any reasonable doubt, whether he that has *endured your guilty manners†* so long, and *waited to be gracious‡* amidst so many years of rebellion against him, will pardon and save you, if you are now cordially willing to accept the great atonement that his Son has made, and yield yourselves the obedient subjects of his government. Behold a forbearing God ready also to appear as a forgiving God, and opening the treasures of his grace to bless

* Rom. ii. 4. † Acts xiii. 18. ‡ Isa. xxx. 18.

you for ever. He yet continues to *speake peace* and salvation, greatly as he has been offended: but presume not further to abuse his indulgence by continued delays, nor venture, at your highest peril, to *turn again to folly*.*

3dly. Let each of us seriously consider, in what respects God requires us to hearken to his voice to-day.

There is little room to hope, that the admonitions that have now been offered, will produce any happy effect, except we enter into the several particulars, in which we ourselves are concerned in them. What is there then in our conduct, in our words, or the temper of our hearts, by which we most frequently offend our glorious Creator? And what sin is that which most easily besets us? It is in that very instance that he requires us to hearken to his voice to-day, to watch more carefully against it from henceforward; to avoid every thing that might tempt us to it; to *abstain from all appearance of evil*†, in that respect especially; and to *hate even the garment spotted with the flesh*‡. What duty have any of us hitherto neglected? Are there any at the heads of families that yet neglect the worship of God in them, or any individuals that live

* Psal. lxxxv. 18. † 1 Thess. v. 22. ‡ Jude 23.
without

without waiting upon God in their secret retirements? He requires you, in these very respects, to hearken to his voice to-day, without any further delay. Are any of us conscious of a kind of habitual coldness and formality in our duties? that all-seeing God, whom we so unworthily worship, limits this very day for us to begin to worship him in a more spiritual and fervent manner, and to seek to have our hearts more awed with his presence, and the greatness of the concerns that we have with him. And if we do not begin to-day, there is little reason to hope that we shall do it to-morrow, or at any future time: for the same sinful dispositions, the intrusions of worldly things, and the same artifices of Satan that hinder us to-day, will, as there is the utmost reason to fear, do it next week, and the following month and year, if life is continued so long, and so on, till we are summoned to appear before God. If therefore, we ever intend to hearken to his voice, let us be solicitous observe in what respects we are especially called to do it, and do it accordingly, without delay, earnestly entreating the assistance and quickening of his blessed Spirit, as indispensibly necessary to teach us to do it effectually.

12 JY 64

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